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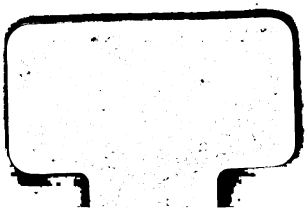

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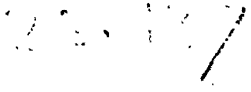

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S.H.1825.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS;

OR,

AN ATTEMPT TO DELINEATE

THE MOST PROMINENT FEATURES

OF THE

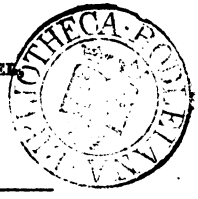
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER:

BY

T. LEWIS,

MINISTER OF UNION CHAPEL,

ISLINGTON.



"Giving all diligence, add to your Faith Virtue; and to Virtue Knowledge; and to Knowledge Temperance; and to Temperance Patience; and to Patience Godliness; and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness Charity."—

2 PETER i. 5, 6, 7.

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TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION IN GENERAL,

AND TO THE

YOUTHFUL HEARERS IN PARTICULAR,

USUALLY ASSEMBLING FOR DIVINE WORSHIP,

AT UNION CHAPEL,

Islington,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR DEVOTED AND SINCERE FRIEND

AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Islington, April 25, 1825.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The Subject of the following Pages had been assigned to the Writer by his Brethren in that District of "Associated Ministers" with whom he has the honour of being connected. He accordingly delivered before them, as one of the Monthly Exercises, a Discourse on the " Characteristics of the Christian." *A wish was subsequently expressed by some of his friends for its publication; and being willing to comply, he was induced to give the various Topics a more leisurely attention, and to carry them out to the present extended form.*

It is unnecessary for him to say that these Chapters will be found without any pretensions to originality of thought, or elegance of style. His exclusive object was to profit his readers by a plain and faithful exposition of the Truth, as pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Christian; and believing that he has drawn the whole from the unerring Word of God, it is his earnest prayer that it may be accompanied with the Divine Blessing, and his humble hope, that in the happy experience of not a few, his prayer will be graciously answered.

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

We cannot but have observed, that whenever the legal currency of the land is known to be counterfeited by some base coinage which certain fraudulent means have thrown into circulation, a cautious and discriminating attention to that article is immediately excited. Each one feels himself interested in detecting imposture; and, according to his stake in the community, he is desirous of ascertaining by what unequivocal marks the true currency may be distinguished from its counterfeit. This is natural,—it is more; vigilance in such a case is what every individual owes to himself and to society. But if careful and skilful discrimination be needful and wise in things pertaining only to the world, it is much more intensely so in things relating to God and our religious interests. There are counterfeits in the religious world; and if it be important to the subsistance and good order of the community that the circulating medium should have its appropriate and distinguishing marks, and that we should know how to choose the true and refuse the false, it is infinitely more important to every purpose of our well-being, that we be able to distinguish the characteristics of

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those who are *accepted* of God, from those who are *rejected* of him. It is especially so, that in delineating the former class from God's own record, his Spirit should bear witness with our spirits, that we have the transcripts in ourselves. In our cautious attention to a matter wholly secular (such as that just alluded to) our credit and confidence, as social beings, may be involved;—in the right discrimination of religious character the glory of God and our own interests, as beings intended for eternity, are deeply concerned.

But the complaint made, long since, by the lip of Wisdom of a people favoured, indeed, with many distinguished privileges, but greatly deficient in the due appreciation of them, applies with equal force to our own day and to our own people.—"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Men of the world are, by no means, generally chargeable with negligence of what they habitually consider as their main interests. Their treasure is in the world, and their hearts are with it. That treasure is the point of attraction to which we see gravitating all their anxieties, and speculations, and energies. To the accumulation and safe-keeping of their earthly property we perceive not, in general, any lack of vigilance or exertion. The thoughts and imaginations of their hearts, their conversational and their practical habits are, in by far the greatest portion of them, employed about this supreme object of attachment. For this

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they seem to live. In the drudgery of the world they willingly toil; and reckon the chief purposes of life fulfilled only as their temporal interests are secured. To obtain human applause, or to hoard up a perishable commodity, they sacrifice personal ease; they devote the hours of their fleeting existence. "They rise early, they sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness" for that which ultimately will not satisfy. They act as if they denied the maxim of the Scriptures, and really believed that "a man's life does consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. They trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations." They accordingly place the chief good in whatever gratifies their cupidity or their ambition. The wisest man in their esteem is he who can devise the most successful plan of worldly advantage; and the happiest he who has risen highest in wealth and power above his fellows.

Such being the general bias and prevailing taste of mankind, it is evident that they require no instituted order of monitors, to urge them to the acquisition and preservation of this world's pelf. They are spontaneously addicted to earthly mindedness, and sufficiently alive and sagacious in every worldly pursuit;—but they are dead to the calls of religion,—they are insensible to the interests of eternity.

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This is the evil to be deplored. Men do not confine themselves within the limits of a just and prudent attention to the things of time. The natural current of the mind sets forcibly in that direction, and they too easily abandon themselves to it. It is therefore against this evil our holy religion has to contend; and that not in the case only of the openly irreligious, but of those, in general, who profess their reverence for the word of God, and give some portion of their time to its institutions. We have but too frequently occasion to lament this earthliness of mind, in the character and conduct of many who would be thought to have renounced the world and its vanities. In our day the profession of religion is common; the consistent practice rare. It has become almost the fashion of the age to exhibit the show and form of godliness. That is an homage which many willingly pay it, who yet deny it the power which it claims over their affections and principles. They fall readily in with the language of a religious profession, and protest loudly against the vices of a world to which they are still fondly attached. They assume the garb of religion,—they imitate her manner,—they comply with her rites and ceremonies; but her lofty avoidance of every carnal and worldly conformity,—her self-denying spirit,—her heaven-aspiring affections, they do not, they care not, to participate. It is only the easy and convenient parts of religion which they adopt. The semblance satisfies them. They have neither time nor inclination to make themselves ac-

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quainted with its reality, to seek after its illuminations, to mortify the passions and prejudices that oppose it in the soul, or to cultivate that supreme love to God and delight in him which are its life and its glory.—No, they have too much to do with the world, to find leisure for more than formal observances. All their energies are wanted to secure some favourite objects of the present life; and they have none for "striving to enter in at the strait gate" of life eternal. They have competitors in the career of wealth, or worldly honour, to contend with; and they have no ardour to expend on "the race that is set before them in the Gospel." They have to exert their strength in surmounting difficulties, and combating enemies in the road to earthly distinctions; and, though they arrogate the name, and wear the uniform of Christ, they have no vigour for the struggles of his service,—no heart "to fight the good fight of faith." These, in fine, are the very characters who strikingly exemplify the truth of our Lord's assertion, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Would to God, that they who, we trust, are recovered from these things, and who are "renewed in the spirit of their mind," were found exemplifying more habitually than they generally do, that heavenly tendency of the affections, and that purity and loftiness of sentiment, to which their high calling continually invites them! —Would to God that the wisdom which cometh from

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above, were more uniformly honoured in the hearts and lives of her children,—that she were seen to shine out, with a less varying, and more evidently increasing light, in their cultivation of every christian grace,—in their ready perception, and steady exhibition of, moral excellence,—in their sensibility and tenderness of conscience,—in the nice discrimination of their own motives,—in knowing and watching against the plagues of their own hearts,—in their practical expression of solicitude for the best interests of mankind; and in their mutual affection, and fellow-labouring for the stability and glory of the Church of Christ!

What an important, what an elevated part have christians to act!—They have protested against the spirit of the world, and have to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to lead sober, righteous, and godly lives.—They have to avow principles of conduct, many of them in direct opposition to those of the world, and many infinitely more sublime and valuable, than the finest maxims of the purest philosophy among men.—They have ranged themselves on the side of truth; and that truth they have to maintain in the face of an erring and deluding world,—not in show, but in reality,—not in word only, but in deed,—not merely when it is treated with general respect, but when it is hated, denied, ridiculed, or persecuted,—not merely when it tallies with their own temporal interests, but at the expense of all temporal interests whatever. They are

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the light of the moral world, and have to shine, not for themselves, but for the glory of God whose light they reflect, and for the illumination of the dark places around them. To fulfil this purpose, they have habitually to watch and pray, that the communications of heavenly grace, as that of oil to the lamp, may never cease; but continue to feed and invigorate their knowledge, their faith and their love; the truth and strength of all which they have uniformly to exemplify before God and man. They are peculiarly the *children* of God, and the honours of his family they have to support. They must show proof of their heavenly birth,—born of God, they must carry his likeness. Sin must no longer be their element; holiness, which characterizes their heavenly Father, must also be the object of their pursuit, and that in all the departments of their nature;—in the powers of their minds, devoting them to the glory of God;—in the affections of their hearts, loving that which he loves, and abhorring that which he abhors;—in their words and actions, seasoning their speech with salt to the use of edifying, and holding out to society a practical example of whatever is wise, and noble, and lovely, and pure, and of good report.

But who is sufficient for these things? Christians of the highest attainments are still imperfect characters. Their knowledge is yet imperfect; for they see but in part. Their faith is yet weak; for they have their doubts and their fears;—neither does their love to God

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possess all the heart, all the soul, and all the mind. There is yet a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, and ever seeking for the mastery over them. Affections they have which still cleave to the dust; and desires which are not yet wholly purified from forbidden pleasures. Then, there are against them the devices of Satan; and the flatteries and the frowns of the world, in league with Satan. The people of God were won by the Redeemer from out of the common apostacy and rebellion of the race. They were, even as others, the servants of sin. The Arch-enemy held them as his lawful prey. They have been ransomed out of this bondage, and wrested from the hand of the mighty by a hand mightier than his. Nevertheless he remains not quiet under the loss of his captives. Again and again, returns he to the contest, with quenchless hatred and malignity, aiming by open and by covert warfare,—by direct assault and secret stratagem, to destroy or mar the work of God upon the soul of man. And the sin that yet dwells in the Christian gives his enemy advantage over him. When the prince of this world comes, he too frequently finds a traitor in the heart by which he succeeds in effecting some evil purpose. It is in this the Tempter's chief advantage lies,—from this he mainly derives his power. It is upon unrenewed nature he operates with success. He finds passions not yet sanctified, and he kindles his unhallowed fires among them.—He finds wills that are not wholly bent under the yoke of Christ, and he dis-

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torts them to disobedience. He well knows how to present its proper bait to every appetite; and labours to embroil the Christian, if possible, with every object around him. Availing himself of human weakness, he makes every aspect of the world dangerous to the soul. In a season of prosperity, he tempts to self-sufficiency and forgetfulness of God; practises on the self-love and cupidity so natural to the heart of man; and distances and obscures to his view the glories of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, by gilding and bringing near the perishing objects of time and sense. In adversity, he lays hold of the native unbelief and impatience of the soul, and excites her to murmur, or casts her down into despondency. He fixes on the vanity of the heart, and the dress of the body ministers to evil;—on the pleasures of the palate, and our table becomes a snare;—on our social attachments, and our companions, our very friends, draw us from God into sin. Nay, such is the natural obliquity of our desires, and such the malicious ingenuity of our spiritual enemy, that qualities, good in themselves, are often made to run out into evils. Our *charity* and *benevolence* will often pamper *self righteousness*,—our *frugality* will degenerate into *parsimony*,—our *industry*, into *earthly-mindedness* and the love of the world.

If this then be the state of the case,—if the best of men be in such perilous circumstances, what need is there of circumspection, of prayer, of watchfulness!

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What need of the warning voice of a faithful ministry, —what need of reiterated admonition and remonstrance and entreaty, that, with the blessing of God, immortal minds may be enlightened, the enemy baffled, souls saved, and the Saviour glorified!

As a minister, therefore, of the everlasting Gospel, the writer of these pages cannot but feel it imperious on him to lay himself out for the one object of calling off the undue attachment of his fellow-immortals from the things of a perishing world, and pointing it to those that, pertaining to God and eternal life, are of paramount importance. With this view it is, that he would press upon his readers the necessity of a new nature, of conformity to the mind and will of God, and of his son Jesus Christ. With this view, he would cease not to insist on the exclusive pretensions of the Gospel to the first and deepest attention of the human mind; and would invite men to the study of its doctrines and precepts, as the announcements of heaven for the formation of a godly and a happy character. It is in pursuance of this object, and to attempt, from the authority of Scripture, a portrait of Divine workmanship on man, that the topics of the subsequent chapters have been selected. The subject proposed claims of the reader, in its own right, his devoutest attention; the manner in which it may be treated, his kindest indulgence.

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CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER ESSENTIAL TO HUMAN HAPPINESS.

It was about eight years after the Saviour's ascension into Heaven, that his Disciples were first called "Christians," an appellation intended merely to classify, or to distinguish them from the various sects and schools of philosophers then known among the Greeks. It would bear, therefore, in the estimation of the people, in general, no claim to exclusive importance. They would employ the term "Christian" with the same kind and degree of interest, as they did that of "Pythagorean," or "Platonist." Whenever, indeed, they made a comparative estimate of Christianity, they were far from honouring it with superior veneration. On the contrary, the proud Greek, and the bigotted Jew, were accustomed to identify it with whatever was foolish and offensive. The religion of Christ was every where "spoken against." Had it been presented to the world by its Founder merely as an improved system of philosophy, or had it put in its claim simply in common with other systems, for its share in the suffrages of studious minds, it would not have drawn upon itself the general execration. It might then have been entertained in the schools of the

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Sophists as furnishing topics worthy of discourse. Had it started only some new hypotheses in physics and metaphysics, or even insisted on some scheme of morality superior to the ethics of every other school, provided it respected the attachment of the Pagan to his Deities, and of the Jew to his ceremonies, it would probably have been tolerated by both; and might even have risen into vogue with many of those who "spent their time in little else than hearing and telling something new." But such was not the character and spirit of Christianity. It set up claims to which the world had not been accustomed. It challenged the implicit belief of mankind to its revelations, as to those of the Most High. It looked with the same uncompromising aspect, on the court of Areopagus and the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem. The Christian Preacher held no parley with the prejudices of men. He found them all opposed to the divine will and to their own salvation: he, therefore, denounced at once the idolatrous institutions of the Pagan, and the self-righteous tenets of the Jew. He did more, he carried to the conscience of every man the condemnatory sentence of God's holy law; declared all mankind to be under sin; and threatened the rejectors of Christianity with inevitable and eternal destruction. So long, therefore, as men kept themselves entrenched within their national and educational predilections, and remained enslaved to their appetites and passions, so long would they be agreed in cordially hating and resisting the religion of Christ. Its lofty

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pretensions, by which it poured contempt on the opinions of the wisest amongst them, was an unpardonable offence to their pride. To men accustomed to the dominion of vile affections, and to wanton in practical abominations justified by their own preconceived notions of religion, nothing could be more unpalatable than the demand of the Gospel upon them for *repentance* towards God, and *faith* in his Son Jesus Christ. Its holy rebukes were revolting to their reprobate and haughty minds; its maxims of humility, of forgiveness, of love, were either not understood, amidst the grossness of their conceptions, or spurned as meanness and pusillanimity; its peremptory summons of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, to the love and service of God, they brooked not, but rejected, as an intolerable encroachment on their liberty and independence. Hence the hostile reception which the primitive Christians had, every where, to encounter. And, had not their religion been what they announced it, the very truth of God, it could not have survived its first experiment on the temper of the world. The opposition and the persecution with which it was assailed from every quarter were too great not to have overpowered any cause but that of God,—the powers of darkness were too violently stirred up against it, not to have extinguished any light but light from Heaven.

To be a Christian, then, was to be no favourite with the world;—it was, on the contrary, to be the butt of

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common ridicule, the object of general hatred and persecution. But this unfriendly spirit was not peculiar to that age. The same spirit has been manifested, though in various forms and degrees, in every subsequent age, to the present day. The enmity put, from the beginning, between the seed of the Woman, and the seed of the Serpent, is unquenchable, and will not cease to be exerted, so long as a Christian and an unbeliever are found together. This state of things, however, so far from laying any ground to question the claims of our holy religion, is a standing and a striking corroboration of its truth. Its great Founder made it the frequent subject of plain prediction, as well as of premonitory allusion. "In the world," said he, "ye shall have tribulation, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

Here would we pause for a brief consideration of two important questions which seem to rise out of this state of things. It is evident, from all our previous showing, that if we would profess Christianity, and lead a Christian life, much sacrifice of what is pleasing to our natural desire, must be made, and much of what is evil and vexatious to our nature, must be endured.—Is it then indispensable to a man's real happiness that he become a Christian?—And what is the nature of that

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process to which he is subjected in being made a Christian?

We may, perhaps, be told that no such question as the former of these, is likely to be put from a quarter where the authority of the Bible is admitted. We are, however, very sure, that both the language and the practice of many professing to receive the Bible, give strong ground of suspicion, that they either do not understand the Christian character, or that they question its necessity. With this suspicion on our minds, we think it of use to start the question in this place, and bestow a few thoughts upon it.

Assuming the Bible, then, to be the word of God, and his word to be the only oracle of truth respecting our own nature and our entire condition, no truth can be more deeply impressed upon us than that of our defection from God, and consequently, from happiness. As it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Now, this defection entails with it, not merely the loss of what is good, but that vitiated taste also by which evil is our natural pursuit. We not only forego the favour of God,

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and our meetness for enjoying him, but contract also an aptitude to increase our moral distance from him, and aggravate our misery. Not that we have lost our desire after happiness, for that is inseparable from our nature; but we have lost the source of happiness. The light that can alone show us where to find it, we have forsaken and in our own unaided attempts to regain it, we only emerge out of one disappointment, to plunge into another; performing, with restless anxiety, a continual circulation, in search of some good, through the various objects of nature within our reach, and unsuccessful in them all. In thus seeking for happiness, without finding it, we at once act from a radical principle of our being, by which we cannot cease to cry out "Who will show us any good," and experience just that issue which it is in the nature of our search to bring. Nothing earthly gives the happiness we seek;—nothing within the apprehension of the natural mind is fitted to supply it. In vain does the soul try to shun its wretchedness, and arrive at bliss; in vain does it shift from pursuit to pursuit, from idol to idol. It is in the condition of him who, racked with bodily pain, or woe-begone at heart, turns on his uneasy couch, from posture to posture, and in each unable to beguile his misery. Now, to man in this distressing and unsettled state, the religion of Christ comes with peculiar adaptation. It comes to us, as to a suffering, a perishing, race,—it comes with instruction on the origin and nature of the evils under which we labour; with warning

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against the means we ignorantly or perversely take to escape them; with the revelation of what alone constitutes our chief good, and with needful direction as to the way of attaining it. Christianity alone tells us, with the authoritative tone of truth, that our malady and misery consist in our departure from God; that he being the perfection of all moral excellence, and the centre of all happiness, it is only as we return to him, in the conformity of our nature to his character and will, that we attain to happiness; and that God knowing our utter destitution of resources in ourselves to effect this conformity, has manifested his love towards us by "sending his only begotten Son into the world, to be the propitiation for our sins, and that we, through him might receive the adoption of sons,"—intelligence which, when rightly perceived, is found to bring us precisely the relief which our condition requires. The world allures by promises of bliss, but proves, upon trial, a deceitful void.—The religion of Christ points us directly to the never-failing fountain of every desirable good. The world is ever tempting us to greater obliquities of mind and moral conduct.—The religion of Christ holds out to us the strongest inducements to resist temptation, and follow after holiness. The world presents us with scenes of tribulation, pain, sickness and death.—The religion of Christ at once exhibits a reconciled God bestowing grace to help in every time of need, and unfolds to our faith the happy issue of every dispensation.

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Let all within the compass of human means be tried, —let all, under the most favourable circumstances, be enjoyed—let the greatest exemption from ill that ever smiled on the lot of humanity be supposed, still is the soul, without God, unsatisfied.—"What availeth all this?" is still the cry of the worldling. Satiety and disgust with the present will attend the fairest form of life. It must be so,—the desires of the soul are too vast for the things of time to fill them. They may grasp in all these things, and try their utmost powers of gratification; but when they have gone the full round of this world's entertainments, they expatiate still beyond them after something not yet found. And what is more, the cup of mere worldly enjoyment is ever dashed with misgivings at heart as to what the future is likely to be. There is a voice which, ever and anon, whispers to the man of pleasure,—of covetousness,—of ambition, "know thou for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." A system of things, therefore, that will supply that something sought for by the soul, and not found in all the offers of the world, is necessary to fallen man; and that system is the Gospel of Christ. It is evidently formed on the principles of love and pity. The Gospel introduces the Son of God himself as the great Agent of man's recovery and restoration. He is there represented as the Surety of sinners, and their only way of return to God. In his Gospel he reveals the actual state of the case between Heaven and Earth, and invites the children

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of men to life and glory through himself.—"I am," says he, "the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." True it is, that this Gospel, recommended, as it proves to be, by all that is admirable in wisdom and power, and by all that is winning in pity and love, is nevertheless very generally hated and rejected of men. To this we have already alluded, and by some brief considerations endeavoured to account for it. It is the hatred of deformity to perfect beauty, the scowling of pride and self righteousness upon humility and self-denial, the rancour of sensuality and worldly-mindedness against purity and spiritual affections. This bad reception of God's communication to man for his happiness proves only more powerfully the fearful depth of darkness in which the human soul is involved, and the force of its enmity against every thing heavenly. Now, all this is to be overcome only by the grace which the Gospel of Christ reveals. Till this be achieved in the heart and character of a man, it is evident that he cannot be happy. But no power is equal to this achievment but the power of Him in whom his happiness is to be found; and it is in the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ that he is revealed, as exerting that power, in the case of every one that believes. The matter is, therefore reduced to this,—Faith in Jesus Christ is necessary to salvation; or, in other words, it is indispensable to a man's real happiness that he become a Christian.

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took up his cross to follow Christ. He is taught to view all his present trials as necessary to his future triumphs. He is sensible, that, whatever their kind or degree, they are sent, or permitted, by his wise and gracious Father for needful purposes. They are part of that training by which, as a child of God, he is to be purified, he is to become a partaker of his Father's holiness, and "be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." From all which we are warranted in declaring, that the privations and the sufferings attendant on "them that live godly in Christ Jesus," form no just ground of objection against the supreme necessity of the Christian character for human happiness.

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CHAPTER III.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Having in the preceding Chapter briefly alluded to the unfavourable aspect of the world towards the Christian character, and raised on that consideration a double question as to the *necessity* of such a character, and the *nature* of its formation, we attempted a reply to the former of these, and endeavoured to show that *it is essential to a man's real happiness that he be made a Christian.* The scope we have taken will be found limited, but we trust, not unprofitable. Our SECOND question comes now to be considered.—"What is the nature of that process to which a man is subjected in being made a Christian?"

It may be well to premise, that what we mean by *becoming, or being made, a Christian,* is nothing less than the conversion of the soul to God,—the acquisition of a new kind of life, whereby the mind perceives new truths, and truths formerly perceived, in a new way. We will not, in the reply we have to make, presume to lay down any procedure as uniform and invariable, in every such event. The Holy Spirit, whose work it is to produce the Christian character, is not limited to human systems. His course of operation is his own. His wisdom, which commands an infinity of resources,

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and his power, which is stayed by no obstacle, are a sufficient security for measures always productive of the happiest and grandest effects. But all his works are in consonance with his own word. We learn to trace his operations from what he has revealed concerning them; and though we attempt not what is impossible to describe, the *manner* of his acting, we can collect the *genuine indications* of it from the divine record. By the authority of that record we shall wholly abide. The process of which we speak is doubtless, various, as the circumstances and the natural character of individuals vary. But in all cases a change, and a *great* change, is produced; and we intend to mark only those parts of the change which agree in all. There are, however, some points which we shall just previously notice, in order to dismiss them from the question.

We observe, then, 1st, that the *Ordinance of Baptism*, however administered, does not make a Christian. That ordinance is an outward application, and merely *symbolical*. It has been, and, from the very nature of things, it must be, administered, in numberless instances, where it would be irrational to suppose a saving knowledge of Christ communicated with it. Of itself it can effect no moral change. It is the inward and Spiritual grace," or, the " renewing of the Holy Ghost" that is alone profitable. Baptism is undoubtedly an institution of Christ, and devoutly to be observed, but to honour him in its observance, it is essential that we assign it no

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other place, and attribute to it no other efficacy, than what he himself intended. Now, the general tenor of Scripture shows that the institution of Baptism by water is intended to be only the outward sign or symbol of regeneration, and a condition necessary to our lawful admission into the visible church of Christ. It is equally clear from Scripture that "Baptism neither ensures nor proves regeneration." "The Apostle Peter, speaking of the evidences of salvation, declares that it is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh that now saves us, but the answer of a good conscience towards God."* That passage is thus explained by a late judicious theologian,† "Baptism, the antitype of the water of the deluge, doth now save us by the resurrection of Christ; not indeed the cleansing of the filth of the flesh, but that which is signified by it; the answer of a good conscience towards God." But let this suffice on a topic that seems so obvious, as to require little more than a general reference to Scripture.

We observe 2ndly, that the Christian character is not produced by a mere *reformation of outward conduct*. The varieties of human character, and the shades of difference between them are almost infinite; and many and great changes may, therefore, be exhibited in individual characters, and yet come very far short of that which is truly Christian. There are transitions

* 1 Pet. iii. 21. † Dwight.

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from a bad, to a better, course of life, fairly within the compass of unassisted reason. A suitable discipline in early life may correct some vices,—an alarm of conscience,—personal convenience,—a regard to the honour that cometh from men,—and the progress of time itself, will frequently operate their own kind and degree of improvement; but in all this God is not honoured, and the man is not yet a Christian. In such cases, however, there is much danger of deception. Man is naturally a vain creature. It is but with a bad grace he owns himself in fault. But, Oh! how he plumes himself on any good thing of which he sees, or fancies he sees, the symptoms in his own character! —how apt to take the credit to himself for any thing about him in the semblance of virtue or religion, and to indulge, if not the loud boast, at least the secret exultation! If he has allowed himself to be convinced, that in his moral conduct there is some evil to be corrected, or some deficiency to be made up, he founds on that very conviction a title to self-complacency. He is flattered with the discovery of his own candour, in being open to conviction; and here he will frequently rest satisfied. But suppose him to go further still; and, from one or other of the motives already noticed, to have abandoned some evil practices, to have fulfilled some neglected duties, and by carrying some amiable and useful moralities to a greater length than usual, to have improved his whole visible character, he fails not to arrogate what he deems a due share of personal

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merit,—and that in the sight, not of his fellows only, but of his God also. He stands well, it may be, with his fellow-men. He may have won their laudatory notice. His superior abilities, his benevolent services, his generous sacrifices, may have given him a just claim to the admiration and gratitude of society. Thus finely, thus pleasingly conditioned, it is hard for him to entertain a doubt of his right standing with God. He cannot, he will not, believe, that aught is yet lacking. He fancies himself, and the world too may fancy him "to be rich, and to have need of nothing," while he knows not, that, in the sight of God, he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Alas! how many take their stand on this delusive ground, and say to their souls "Peace, Peace! be of good cheer, and take your ease." But we would implore the men of this description, who, wrapping themselves up in their own fine moralities, and backed by a host of evidence as to character from the world, look with serene confidence to the coming judgment, and anticipate an honourable acquittal. We would implore them to pause, and reconsider their case, ere it be too late. Consider, we beseech you, the difference between the character of the world and the character of God. The former you have studied, and you know it.—Its maxims, its sympathies, its modes of judging and deciding, ye know; and ye have learnt to meet them, it may be, with the happiest success.—But do ye know the character of the God with whom ye have

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to do?—Have ye studied his will, and the constitution under which He has placed you?—If not, haste ye, acquaint yourselves with him.—Seek to ascertain the mind of your future Judge, and the nature of that law by which you will be tried; lest, instead of an acquittal, ye be met with a frown, and hear the appalling words, "Ye thought that I was altogether such a one as yourselves; but I will reprove you, and set your sins in order before your eyes."

We observe 3rdly, It is not *the adoption of correct opinions of Christianity*, nor is it *Church-membership under a Gospel-ministry*, that will make a Christian. A right knowledge of the Gospel is certainly indispensable. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good." It is an excellent attainment of itself, and worth all our diligence. It is also incumbent on the Christian to unite in brotherly and devout communion with his fellow Christians; but the one may be attained, and the other practised, and the man not yet a Christian. "Not every one," says Christ, "not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven." And what says his Apostle?—"Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing." It is very possible to be deeply read in theology, to be familiar with all the questions that have been raised upon it, to be master of all the arguments in favour of orthodoxy, and even to contend earnestly for the faith, and yet be

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far from conformity with the mind of Christ. The kingdom of God is not in *word*, but in *power*. A man may possess a taste for the *study* of Religion,—he may be fond of researches in Divinity, and of Biblical Criticism; and his labours in that department may even be useful to many of God's people; and yet he may himself be a stranger to the life of God in his soul. He may, from the aids of education and intellect, discriminate justly, and describe impressively, and his own heart remain unaffected;—he may have skill to prepare and garnish a feast of which he has no relish to partake. It is, alas! the testimony of general experience, that a well-informed mind, with an alienated heart, is, by no means, a rare phenomenon in the world. The Christian is essentially a character *of heart*. He is not, and cannot be, without knowledge; but that knowledge, however partial, is sanctified by grace in the *heart*. It is that "light" which the Holy Spirit, by shining into his heart, has been pleased to give him, "of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." All other knowledge, however extended, may adorn the head, and teach the tongue its skill; but not coming from God, it leads not to him.—The man has not learnt it in the school of Christ, and he is therefore "none of his."

Other precautionary remarks might be made; but not to be tedious, we would only add, 4thly, that *religious impressions powerfully made, and strong emo-*

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tions, about divine things, occasionally felt, are not to be reckoned the genuine indications of a christian state. There are certainly times when the mind of the Christian is more than usually stirred, and when it is drawn, by some uncommon action upon its affections, to the warmer exercises of devotion. There are seasons when faith is more lively and vigorous, than at other times. This is consistent with the experience of the genuine believer in Christ. He is not, at all times, the same. He is sometimes indulged with the delightful converse of his God, and partakes a joy unspeakable and full of glory.—At another time, he allows sensible objects to occupy him, and they obscure his heavenly prospects. Yet still the general bent of his soul is towards God; and when the remaining corruptions of his heart rebel against the law of his renewed nature, "he groans, being burdened; and longs to be delivered from the body of that death." But the feelings against which we now caution are of a different character. They are feelings which may place the mind in a good frame, for a little time, but do not fix it. The determination of the will is not gained, and the next breath of feeling impels, in a contrary way, perhaps more forcibly than the last. Sometimes a man may be deeply affected, while his thoughts dwell with unusual intenseness on the terrors of God's displeasure against sin, and the awful descriptions given of his wrath in the regions of hopeless misery. At other times, he indulges the most delightful visions of the

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grandeur and the glory of Heaven, and of the transcendant majesty of Christ upon his throne, adored by Angels and his ransomed people, beaming upon them all the looks of love, and joy, and happiness unspeakable. These emotions may be merely casual. They may belong only to the imagination. They are often felt by the mere formalist. They arise not from humbling ideas of his own nature, or from sufficiently enlightened conceptions of the nature of God. They are frequently the offspring of a culpable self-complacency, and a groundless presumption on the goodness of his state. Such feelings will not stand in the day of trial. The cold and neglectful regards of the world will extinguish them;—they will vanish before persecution; and prove themselves to have been foreign to the general tenor of the mind.—They are not the feelings of a truly Christian state.

Coming now to speak more immediately to the question before us, we observe,—that the true Christian character is not found as a production of nature, or as superinduced by any human discipline, or any ingenuity of man; but originated, wrought in all its parts, and perfected, by the grace and power of God. The Christian is a *regenerated* character.—We adduce the authority of Christ. "Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Agreeably to this doctrine, the Apostle says, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a *new creature*;"—"the workmanship of

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God created in Christ Jesus." A man is, therefore, made a Christian by a *creative* power, and that power must be divine. Now, that this work can be nothing less than a *creation*, or a bringing to *new life*, will be acknowledged, when it is recollected, that the "original transgression" lost to man the image of God, in which he had been created.—In other words, the righteous sentence, of which he had previous warning, was executed upon him;—in the day that he sinned, he *spiritually* died. That beautiful and noble state of rectitude in intellect, in will, in affection, constituting the life of God in his soul, and given him of God in his creation, was not merely *marred*, but *slain*, by sin. The life thus lost he cannot recover for himself, no more than he could at first have been his own creator. Hence, as it has been forcibly expressed, "We are by nature in the dark grave of depravity, and we can no more raise and bring ourselves out of it, than a carcase which is lain in a grave can throw off the clods that cover it, or unlock the door of the vault it is in."* Therefore, to have this life restored, a man must be *born again—created anew*, and that by a power out of himself. The agency of the Holy Spirit is that power. The regenerated person, or the Christian, is said to be "*born of the Spirit*,—to live,—to walk, *in the Spirit*," and to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the *Holy Ghost*."

* Taylor.

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The restoration of spiritual life is immediately referred to this almighty agency, in the address which God makes to the House of Israel, by the prophet Ezekiel. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put *my spirit* in you, and ye shall live." This important work, on the part of the Holy Spirit, arises at once from the necessity of man's actual condition, and the sovereign, unmerited, mercy of God. The natural man is in no condition for the enjoyment of God, or the happiness of Heaven. If such enjoyments are ever to be his, his nature must undergo a change. "Without holiness," we are assured, "no man shall see the Lord."—The sinner is unholy, and unfit for such a vision. Neither can he qualify himself for it, being dead in the eye of God's righteous law; and it follows inevitably, that he is in no condition to merit that qualification at the hands of another. The agency of the Spirit of God, in this renewing work, is, therefore, as gracious, as it is indispensable. To God only is due all the glory of the *new man* or the *Christian character*.—It is He "who," to speak in apostolic language, "being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath made us alive, together with," or "*by* Christ."

It will doubtless be perceived, from what we have already advanced, that, as a primary step in the process

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of restoration to spiritual life, (which is what we mean by being made a Christian,) it is necessary that *conviction* of the sinfulness and misery of the natural state be wrought upon the soul. Till this is obtained, the mind is content with its native darkness; the conscience slumbers, and the sinner is in no disposition to seek God. His education, indeed, and what he has learnt from the preaching of the Gospel, may have prepared him to acknowledge that he is a sinner. He holds, it may be, the views of human nature common to all who admit the truth of the Bible. He does not pretend to a perfect conformity with the Divine mind, nor deny that sin exposes to punishment. But this is merely the conclusion to which he is brought, from the common exercise of his mind on the question of his moral condition;—a conclusion suggesting little or no alarm, being generally neutralized by the subtlety of self-righteousness and unbelief. But when the Spirit of God brings home to the mind the knowledge of the law in its truth, its purity, and its extent, he gains not only the assent of the understanding, but the conviction and the alarm of the conscience. Sin, though acknowledged before, was not felt. It was looked at with a partial eye; and the sinner was ever disposed to palliate its enormity by alleging the peculiarity of circumstances, or sheltering himself, as a last resort, under the absolute mercy of God. Thus, "he was alive once," that is, in his own estimation, not realizing the spirituality of the law, nor applying it to himself, as

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forming the ground of his responsibility.—But the Divine Agent brings home the commandment in its true character, and sin revives. It rises up from that torpid state into which it had been hushed by self-flattery, and shows itself in the terrors of its hugeness, of its deformity, and its guilt. Now all the false life of the sinner;—his fancied goodness, safety, and acceptance with God, die away under the force of this discovery. He now hears the law as addressed to *himself*. He feels it applied to his conscience, as the indispensable rule of duty; and is alarmed at the hideous contrast which his sinful life presents to its perfect rectitude. The lustre of its holiness breaks in upon him with a quick and powerful effect, and he is confounded with the keenness with which it pierces to the most secret motions of his soul, and "discerns the thoughts and intents of his heart." He is now like one arraigned and condemned. He owns himself "carnal, sold under sin," while he does homage to the law of God, and consents that "it is holy, and just, and good."

Conviction thus wrought on the soul of a sinner produces something more than a sense of danger. His eyes are now partially opened.—The Spirit of God descends, as a Spirit of light, into his heart; and shows it up to his awakened conscience "a cage of every unclean bird." *Self-loathing and Self-condemnation* now take place of his former presumption and

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self-complacency. Before, he thought that he had "washed himself in snow water, and made his hands very clean," but now, he "is plunged in the ditch, and his own clothes abhor him."—How great a revolution in his judgment and feelings! He finds that his heart, on the goodness and soundness of which he was wont to rely, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;"—that it has betrayed him into a thousand errors on topics of importance to his eternal interests;—that it had been fashioning the character of God to its own liking; and interpreting his law to its own indulgence. A very different view of the Almighty now opens before him. He now sees that the God with whom he has to do, is a God of awful majesty, of immaculate holiness, and of inflexible justice. This view of God drives him from all his subterfuges, and destroys all his false hopes. He is confounded before a God whose keen and righteous eye, he is now made to feel, has ever been bent upon him; to mark, not his immoralities only, but every imagination of the thoughts of his heart; and of whom he is assured, that "in his sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly." God was held at a distance before, and he, knew him not;—now, he comes near, and the glory of the vision overawes and humbles him. The exclamation of Job is now the most appropriate to his case, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!"

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But the work of the Holy Spirit is a perfect work:—He abandons not the sinner to terror and dismay.—He puts the case in its proper light before him. He is made to see that his sins have the character not merely of *rebellion*, but *ingratitude*;—that his life has been at once an exhibition of awful daring against the majesty, the holiness, the truth and the sovereignty of God; and of shameful ingratitude, in return for his long forbearance, his merciful warnings, his condescending invitations; and, above all, his offers, not only of pardon, but of grace and glory, through his son Jesus Christ. This is the view that wins its way most speedily to the heart. Terrors may silence, threats may harden, and even promises may be spurned away; but, such is the constructiou of the human heart, it will soonest yield to the appeals of wounded goodness,—to the complaining language of ill requited love.—It is our common experience.—How often have we seen a headstrong, obstinate character, that stood out against all the battery of hard-names and heavy accusations; and continued proof against the clearest reasoning and the wisest admonitions, fall before the tender look of kindness still urgent, though oft insulted; and melt under the tears of love yet unquenched, though oft abused! It was this that melted Peter. He had been guilty of a great sin, in denying his Lord, when in the hands of his enemies; but while the harsh, ungrateful, denial was yet on his tongue, his much injured Lord turned upon him one of those divine looks, more eloquent than a thousand

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reproaches, and the floodgates of his heart gave way.—"He went out and wept bitterly." And, long before him, a similar view of God's unmerited and ill-returned favour and love stung the dormant conscience, and threw into penetential debasement, the soul of David, when he cried, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!"

The Spirit of God well knows how to give effect to all his operations. He displays his perfect law to the conscience, and the man acquires the knowledge of sin, in its odious nature and tremendous guilt.—He unveils to him the character of God, in the glory of his holiness, his justice and his truth; and the sinner is overwhelmed with a sense of his entire pollution, and helpless exposure to penal wrath. All the denunciations of an outraged and broken law are now felt, as if impatient for execution against him. Deep sorrow and self condemnation mingle with his fear. He is now brought to humble acknowledgment and ardent prayer. "Woe is me," he exclaims, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. O Lord! rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chastise me in thy hot displeasure. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. Forsake me not O Lord! O my God! be not far from me." In this state of inward distress, the soul is said, by a strong

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figure of speech, "to wrestle with God, and to give him no rest." Impressed with a conviction that none but God can heal, none but he deliver and save him, the sinner returns, again and again, to the throne of mercy. He feels every thing depending on a favourable answer. He pours out his desires with painful solicitude. The forgiveness of his sins and relief from terror; the manifestations of God's favour, and the assurance of peace, are the objects for which he importunes the offended majesty of Heaven. It may be, that notwithstanding all his anguish, and all his importunity, he apprehends not yet, with sufficient clearness and avidity, the only available plea. He urges perhaps every other variety of argument.—He prays the Almighty, in consideration of his acknowledged goodness, his mercy, his tender compassion;—He even pleads his own wretchedness, and the intolerable burden of his sins, to obtain instant pity and ultimate salvation. But the Divine Agent, who has brought the soul into this lively and interesting agitation, leaves her not to fruitless labour and unavailing anguish. In the progress of his gracious work, he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to the soul. He had before convinced the sinner, by an exhibition of the law against him, of his utter inability to meet its demand; and now he shows him *where* its demands are met. By the one view, he is led to cast himself entirely on the mercy of God, with the language of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;"—by the other, he beholds the ground of hope in Christ

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revealed as "the end of the law for righteousness." The entrance of this hope revives his soul, as the solar beams revive the vegetable world from the deadness of Winter. Increase of light dilates his mind, and genial warmth from the Spirit quickens the better affections of his heart. He was made to feel himself lost from God and from happiness; but now, the Spirit announces the Saviour as "come to seek and to save that which was lost." He had been groaning under the pressure of accumulated sins; but he now hears the invitation of the Son of God. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" He was bowed to the ground under the condemnation of a broken law; but the Holy Spirit raises him up, as he points him to the record,—"There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Before, he was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;—now, he rejoices to see that they who were once "far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ;" and from "strangers and foreigners," become, through him, "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

In fine, as the method of salvation is unfolded before him in the illuminations of the Spirit, he is increasingly impressed with its admirable adaptation to his case. He is surprised and delighted, as his conceptions of the Saviour grow. Truths which he had often heard

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and read before, now come with all the force, and freshness, and beauty of discoveries. He wonders at the insensibility and stupidity of his former state, while he contemplates the astonishing love, and wisdom, and power of God displayed in his redemption. He sees how "Glory to God in the highest" is made to harmonise with "peace on earth, and goodwill towards men;"—how "God can be just," and yet "the justifier of him who believes in Jesus;"—how the breaker of his law may escape punishment, may even find favour, and yet the law be magnified and made honourable."—He sees "mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other." He is now enabled through grace to apprehend the love of God towards him, "in that while he was yet a sinner Christ died for him;"—while he was yet a rebel pursued by divine justice, Christ became his refuge;—He was the captive and the slave of Satan; but Christ has paid his ransom with his own blood, and set him free.—He was exposed to the righteous judgments of God, both temporal and eternal; but Christ became "a curse for him, and bare his sins in his own body on the tree, and by his stripes he is healed." The divine principle of Faith is now wrought in his soul. In the exercise of Faith, he apprehends the Saviour, as his Surety and Representative, upon whom the judicial sentence against his sin has been executed; and who, by his perfect righteousness, has fulfilled the law,

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in his stead. In the exercise of this grace, he recognizes Christ in all his mediatorial capacities; and the entire surrender which he makes of himself to him is *freely* and *willingly* made; for this renewing work of the Spirit is, in every view of it, a *gracious* work. His influence in regeneration is, indeed, powerful, as the case requires, but not in forcible opposition to the will of the mind on which he operates. That influence is of such a nature, that the will, instead of pertinaciously resisting it, readily and cheerfully coincides in its wise and holy tendencies, agreeably to the promise made to Christ, "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." It is in the very nature of Faith to convey to the soul an exhilirating view of the character of God. It is "the substance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen." By Faith the soul takes a telescopic survey of heavenly and spiritual objects. The size and glory of each is, in the exercise of this grace, enlarged. They are brought near to the eye of the mind;—they shed their conforming and purifying influences on the whole inner man; and a happiness, far exalted above the gifts of the world, becomes the believer's portion. He recognizes and chooses whatever the Holy Spirit reveals as part of the Gospel-plan. Every thing connected with it he sees, as it were, with a new eye, and feels with a new heart. "What things were gain to him before, he now counts loss for Christ." His own wisdom, formerly the object of his pride, is now folly;—his self-righteousness is

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filthy rags;—" yea, doubtless, and he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." He is now ashamed of what he once made his glory, and glories in what he once despised. Wherein he once thought himself strong, he now owns his weakness; and calls his former securities but " refuges of lies." Once, he saw the wrath of God revealed against him as a sinner, and it made him afraid; now, his faith lays hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel, and he is enabled to sing, " Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

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CHAPTER IV.

FAITH.

The man on whom the process we have described has passed, is now a Christian. Faith is the principle of the divine life on which he has entered; for, it is the appointment of God that "the just shall live by Faith." In the exercise of this principle, the Christian's progress is maintained, and so long as he is in the body, it is essential to his profitable intercourse with heaven. We therefore entreat our reader's attention, while we speak of it at greater length; after which we mean to consider, one by one, various other Christian characteristics which flow from, or are connected with this fundamental principle. In doing this we think it expedient to restrict ourselves to the number and order suggested by the Apostle Peter.

In a general address to such as had received the Gospel, and whom he affectionately salutes as his Brethren in Christ Jesus, he reminds them of their deliverance from the corruption of a natural state, of the supply afforded them of every thing needful to life and godliness, and of the exceeding great and precious promises made to them in Christ. He then proceeds, from these considerations, to urge them to a diligent cultivation of the graces belonging

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to their character, and enumerates a series of them, as attending on and adorning the Christian, like a chorus of sisters, in beautiful and harmonious union. "Giving all diligence," "saith he, add to your Faith Virtue," or more agreeably to his own expression, "join hand in hand with your Faith Virtue; and with Virtue Knowledge; and with Knowledge Temperance; and with Temperance Patience; and with Patience Godliness; and with Godliness Brotherly Kindness; and with Brotherly Kindness Charity." Nothing contributes so powerfully to the strength and harmony of a band associated in behalf of a common cause, as the individual reciprocation of the feelings which that cause excites. The zeal of one stimulates to higher effect that of another; and his again that of a third, till all the members of that corps seem instinct with one soul and one heart. It is in such efficient connexion as this that the expression of the Apostle represents the Christian Graces. There is a natural dependance and assistance, a kindly action and reaction, maintained amongst them; and they so linked together, that the failure of one weakens and endangers the whole.

FAITH is the leader of this band, or chorus, of Graces. This is the grace which emphatically gives the character of which we speak. It takes precedence of all the others; and stamps on each of them its excellence and beauty.—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is that characteristic by which a man has a

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legitimate title to the name of Christian. The name may, indeed, be, and often is, assumed where faith is not wrought in the soul. The assumption may even pass current among men; and the usurper of the name himself may carry it through life, with the ease and complacency of one, whose claim is not to be questioned;—but, it is not registered in Heaven; and Christ in judgment will rebuke from his presence the false bearer of his name with I know thee not." The faith which he will acknowledge is, like every other token of salvation, the gift of his own Spirit. It is, as we have seen, the result of a divine operation on the soul. It is something more than a bare assent of the mind to the truths revealed in the word of God, or than the stirring of some warm affections of the heart, from the force of conviction. It is a deep-wrought, abiding, and pervading, principle by which he discerns the Saviour in his proper character; receives him, as he is freely offered in his Gospel; and rests unreservedly upon him, for all his salvation. It is that grace by which the Christian more especially glorifies God, and honours the cause of Christ, as it is by his faith "he sets to his seal that God is true;" and exercises an implicit reliance on the testimony and promises of the word he has revealed.

It is therefore to be expected that this grace will form a prominent article in the annunciations of the Gospel. We accordingly find it peculiarly insisted

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on. The writers of the New Testament do not unfrequently employ it, by way of eminence to designate the whole scheme of the Gospel. Felix, on sending for Paul to commune with him, is said to have "heard him concerning the *Faith* in Christ;" and that Apostle tells the Galations, that the churches in Judea glorified God in him when they remarked, "He that persecuted us in times past now preacheth the *Faith* which he once destroyed." In these passages, and in some others which might be quoted, the term Faith is evidently synominous with the *Gospel* at large, or those doctrines which contain the objects of the Christian's Faith. The things apprehended and rested upon by the believer, are announced under the name of that grace by which he apprehends and rests upon them. It is also observable that the Redeemer himself took frequent occasion to mark its preeminence. While he was, dispensing his blessings to the humble applicants around him, he would say to one, "Thy *faith* hath made thee whole;" and to another, "Thy *faith* hath saved thee, go in peace;"—thus giving to the exercise of this grace the most distinguished honour.

Now, for the object of its exercise this divine principle regards the Deity himself,—and more especially, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his divine nature and mediatorial character. By this grace the believer realizes the existence of God; and that not only as he is manifested in the grandeur and the glory of his creation, and in

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the wisdom of his *providence ;* but also as arrayed in all those gracious and blessed attributes in which his *word* has revealed him ;—"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." By this grace the believer realizes the continual presence of God ; acknowledges him in all things, and in all events ; and, as Enoch did by the same faith, "walks with God." His faith teaches him to view alike the invariable, the faithful, God, in the works of nature ; and the covenant-keeping God, with whom there is no shadow of a turning, in the revelations of his grace. It is the faculty by which he descries the Arbiter of the world turning round all the affairs of men, not more in the higher and wider ranges, than in the minutest divisions of them ; and by which he hears his voice in the decrees which govern them, and can tell the crowds of unbelievers whom he passes on his way.

> "I hear a voice *you* cannot hear,
> I see a hand *you* cannot see."

More especially, this faith has for the Object of its exercise the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Spirit of truth, who works this holy principle in the soul, presents the Saviour as its Special Object.—"He (the Spirit) shall testify of me," saith Christ, "he shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." All that concerns this Object is peculiarly interesting to the believer. His faith gladly, gratefully, and affectionately receives whatever revelations respecting him the

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Holy Spirit condescends to make.—And, O! what are those revelations!—The Spirit of truth brings to the eye of faith which he has himself opened, the divinity and eternal sonship of the Redeemer. He testifies to the humble and devout believer, that he who wrought his salvation is "God over all blessed for evermore;"—that dwelling with God the Father from all eternity, he anticipated, as it were, the work of love he was to perform for sinners, and "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the children of men." He presents this Object of faith, as coming under the commission of his Father to redeem a ruined world, and as a voluntary surety for his people;—as humbling himself to the task of fulfilling all righteousness, of re-establishing and magnifying a broken law, and sustaining in his own person the penalties incurred by a race of rebels;—and delivering himself up to the death, "the just for the unjust, to bring them to God." He shows also the triumph of the Saviour over death, and his full and honourable acceptance before the Father, in his resurrection and ascension into heaven; and his gracious employment there; advocating the cause of his people, before the throne of God, and receiving gifts for them, which he ceases not to bestow in every time of need. These things, indeed, and many important things connected with them, are all plainly taught in the books of the New Testament. They are prominent topics with the Evangelists and Apostles; and no hearer of the pure

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Gospel can be altogether ignorant of them. But the annunciation of such things may be reiterated to the outward ear;—they may even draw the attention;—they may fill with their grandeur, and delight with their beauty, the imaginations of men, and yet the soul, as to every valuable effect, remain wholly unimpressed. It is the work of the Holy Spirit alone to make them bear upon the understanding with saving illumination, to apply them to the conscience with awakening power, and to procure for them an entrance into the heart whose every affection and every desire he melts and subdues under their appeals. It is then that faith truly appropriates the Saviour. The believer then recognizes him in all his characters;—as the Prophet of God, by whose word he has been made to know the truth, and the blessed freedom which that truth brings with it;—as a Priest "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," who having power to lay down his life and power to take it up again, gave it freely away to satisfy divine justice for him, and to bring in his everlasting salvation; and who is now making effectual intercession in his behalf, before the throne;—and as a King, who has rescued him by his might from the power of darkness, and has translated him into his own kingdom; who rules in him by his spirit; defends him by his grace and power; and restrains and conquers all his enemies. His faith embraces the Saviour in these various capacities, as essential to the progress and consummation of his spiritual interests. He sees all

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these characters combine to form a full, complete, and benevolent Saviour. To him therefore he freely surrenders himself and all that he holds most precious, for the life which now is, and for that which is to come.

His faith involves in it a perfect *trust*, an unreserved *confidence*, in One whom he has found more than equal to all his necessities; who is not only mighty to redeem, but gracious to accept. He can know no fear which this Saviour is not able and ready to dissipate; he can be in no bondage from which the Object of his trust cannot deliver him; nor is there any spiritual enemy that his Redeemer has not actually bruised, or promised to bruise, under his feet. His faith includes in it also the emotions of *gratitude* and *love*. He cannot apprehend such a Saviour as the Son of God, without a deep sense of his eternal obligations to him. When his faith realizes the divinity clothed in flesh, humbling himself under the law broken by men,—fulfilling all righteousness in their room,—bearing in his own body on the tree, the penalty of their guilt,—and displaying in all this the mercy of God in reconciling at such a cost a lost world to himself;—when faith realizes and appropriates such things as these, the natural and necessary effect is to overflow the heart with feelings unspeakably grateful and affectionate. "We love him," say the redeemed, "because he first loved us."

In every possible aspect, this grace shows itself peculiarly excellent and important. In reference to its

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Object, it is the *bond* of union between Christ and the believer. In reference to the believer himself, it is that principle in the exercise of which he grows in every other grace; and draws from Christ, the head of all gracious influences, the means of increasing with all the increase of God. In reference to society, it is that characteristic by which he is most eminently recognized among men. He lives in the world by *faith*, and not by *sight*. It is when this grace is in lively exercise; that he is seen travelling in the greatness of his Father's might, through all the changes of his present life. His eye, fixed above, is looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith; and he is pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of his high-calling. His faith is to him "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." You see him, therefore, holding in contempt the pleasures of sin, resisting the temptations of the evil one, and overcoming the world. You see him, it may be, encompassed with difficulties; clouds and darkness gather about him, "and neither sun nor stars are seen for many days;" but his faith has cast anchor within the veil;—he sinks not;—he knows in whom he has believed; and you hear him, from time to time, supporting his soul upon the promises of a faithful God—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me. Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." It is when this characteristic shines, that he most clearly manifests

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his deeds to be wrought of God. Under the pressure of affliction he passes on unsubdued; but he acknowledges that "he goes in the strength of the Lord his God."—He is serene in the midst of trouble; but he ascribes it to the love of God shed abroad in his heart.—He smiles even in the prospect of death; but he says, "I will not fear for *Thou* art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

If such be a just view of this Christian characteristic, how needful for us is the prayer of the Apostles, "Lord, increase our faith!" Without this divine principle it is evident that we can neither live profitably, nor die safely. We shall find it essential to the steadiness of our general course; to the solace of our minds in affliction; and to our triumph over the Tempter, when he would drive us to apostacy or despair.

As means, then, of obtaining, and helps to the perfecting, of this grace, we ought 1st, to cultivate a *deep sense of the importance of self knowledge,* and of *right views of the mind of God.* We are hearers of the Gospel, and perhaps, grave professors of faith in Jesus Christ. This must not suffice. Self partiality is a great snare, and if to this there be added the good opinion of our brethren around us, we must take heed that we apply not "the flattering unction to our souls," and complacently settle on our lees, resigned to barren quietism and false security. The enemy of souls has

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ruined many, by tempting them to such an issue. Let us beware of resting satisfied with present attainments. Such a state of mind indicates little faith, because it is a lamentable proof of little knowledge.—"If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Let us hold it always essential to our well-being to maintain an intimate acquaintance with ourselves. "Examine yourselves," says the Apostle, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own-selves." He well knew the treachery and vanity of the human heart, and that to be self-ignorant was to be hostile to the faith; therefore did he urge, with peculiar earnestness, the lesson of self-examination. The mind of God respecting the actual condition of man can never be welcomed, and therefore not believed, by a heart that is unwilling to be searched. The humbling doctrine of man's guilt and helplessness will not, and cannot, be understood and appropriated, but only as we are made to know ourselves; and it is only as we advance in this Knowledge, that we can relish the richest communications of divine favour. But, as this attainment is above our native power and ingenuity, we must implore the aids of the Holy Spirit. We are exhorted and commanded to do this, as we are other duties of the Christian life. "Let us search and try our ways," saith the Prophet, "and turn again to the Lord;" but to ensure success, we must engage the wisdom and the light of God's Spirit. We are then, to pray with the devout Psalmist, "Examine me, O Lord! and

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prove me; try my reins and my heart. Search, me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

2ndly. *Let us guard against extravagant and vain glorious notions of human reason and human character.* In so far as we withdraw our love and admiration from the wisdom and the grace of God, to any fancied excellence as inherent in man, we paralize the efforts, and dim the vision of our faith. The worth of God's gift is diminished, whenever they are considered as rendered less needful by the native goodness of the receiver;—and here, it is obvious, faith can have no place. A constant and abiding habit of regarding the divine mind as the alone source of all moral excellence, is necessary to its being. Faith lives and acts only in realizing God as the object of the highest love and gratitude. It mortifies the pride of man, and exalts the grace of God. It ascribes to man guilt, degradation and wretchedness, and gives to God all the glory of his recovery. —"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

3dly. *Let us come to the study of God's word,* as *learners,* with a mind open to conviction,—humble,

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docile, disinterested; with child-like simplicity, willing to account ourselves as "fools, that we may be wise.' The Gospel is purely a *revelation*. Its peculiar doctrines are such as flesh and blood could not reveal; and he who acquires that knowledge of them which results in saving faith, learns them only of the Spirit of God. Whatever, therefore, be our distinctions, as to strength of intellect, rank in life, number of years, or engagements with society—these, and whatever else would arrogate any accommodation from the word of God, must all be renounced. Prejudice of every kind, whether educational or constitutional, must be denied. If we seek the truth sincerely, we shall seek it of God, with the simplicity of a child. It is only in this way that Christ receives a pupil. "Verily I say unto you," (it is his own announcement,) "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Let us seek this preparation of mind in devout and fervent prayer; and God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, will grant us the Spirit of wisdom, to lead us into all truth; and his "Holy Scriptures will make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

4thly. *Let the truths already known receive our affectionate confidence and cheerful obedience.* It is thus only we shall prove the light in us to be light from God; and that the truths we acknowledge are revealed to us by his Spirit. It is thus, too, we shall facilitate

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our progress in the spiritual life. By a diligent and grateful exercise of faith in objects already impressed upon our hearts and understandings, we shall become increasingly susceptible of other and greater impressions. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." It is by such exercise that his capacity and appetite for knowledge, will be enlarged; and to this state of mind a liberal promise is made.—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

5thly. It becomes us to *cultivative reverence and admiration of God,* as a righteous, a holy, and a gracious Being. The Gospel is a display of God's moral perfections; and in so far as he is endeared to our souls in those perfeotions, does our faith grow in its compass and its vigour. Our minds should dwell, with frequent and devout contemplation, on the truth and holiness of God, as exhibited in the atonement made by his own Son. Our thoughts should be much employed on the grandeur and the grace of redemption through him, and our preception of heavenly things will become more and more lively and delightful, and our faith and love will be fed at the fountain of spiritual life and blessedness. Every kindly—every divine, affection will grow in our hearts, as we cherish reverent and grateful remembrances of a compassionate and holy Redeemer giving himself for us. Turning habitually to this glorious Object, our delight in him will increase; our faith will act more

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and more intensively upon him as our atonement, and as our pattern; and so, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To this let me add, by way of indicating the signs of a true and saving faith that in whatever degree it is possessed, if it be genuine, it will engender a *humble estimate of self*, and an *exalted opinion of Christ*; "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This humility is the result of the Spirit's convictions, and attendant upon it is the admiration of the Saviour. Faith in lively apprehension of its object prompts to the language of adoration and confidence—"My Lord! and my God!"

True faith also *worketh by love*. It is impossible to appropriate a crucified Saviour, without emotions of tenderness and love. A faith that is wrought of God dilates the heart. The manifestations of redeeming-love, in the incarnation, the obedience, death, and advocacy of the Son of God, captivate the soul with peculiar force. But it is a captivity of delight. The love of God descending into the heart is God's own entrance there; "for God is *Love*;" the affections own the presence of their Lord;—they become *his*, and a ready obedience follows.

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Again, true faith overcomes the world,—overcomes its favours and its frowns. It is independent of the world; for it "looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. It trusts the word of a faithful and powerful God, against the contradictory aspect of external things. It places the believer at a throne of grace, and makes him importunate there, against apparent denials and repulses; and, under all the vicissitudes and trials of life, "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

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CHAPTER V.

FORTITUDE.

The second characteristic of the Christian, in the order we have chosen to follow, is Virtue.—"Add to your faith Virtue." As a Christian grace, we conceive Virtue to mean Fortitude—or that *Decision* of character, which, with becoming boldness, avows and embraces the truth,—that *Courage*, with which the Christian goes undauntedly to the service of God,—that *Firmness* of resolution, with which he sustains every difficulty or danger that may meet him in his course. We do not suppose that the Apostle intends by the term he has here used, and which is translated *Virtue*, that "Moral Rectitude" in general, or that Virtue which is simply opposed to Vice. Such a view of it would necessarily destroy the good sense and force of the whole passage. The term Virtue, in this large acceptation, would comprehend within it, and consequently, anticipate those graces of the Christian character which follow in the Apostle's enumeration. By each one of the series he undoubtedly means a distinct excellence—a something that in itself must *add* to the worth and beauty of the whole. Without this, it is obvious, that the admonition throughout would

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be confused and unimpressive. The term, indeed, of which we are now speaking, is known, in the original, to denote properly *martial bravery*, or the courage and intrepidity of a soldier. We are, therefore, every way correct in considering Virtue, in this place, as expressive of Christian Fortitude.

The peculiar propriety with which our Apostle immediately connects this bold quality with Faith, will be easily perceived. Faith is, in its own character, an ennobling and elevating grace. Wherever it operates aright, it raises the heart above fear,—a passion which prevails only as faith is enfeebled. Our Lord, in rebuking timidity, charges it to the weakness of faith; "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith." The man of faith feels himself allied to omnipotence. When, therefore, that principle rules, the believer does not, cannot, fear. What the Apostle John says of perfect love, as casting out fear,—a *slavish* fear of the great and gracious God, is true of perfect faith, which casts out also a *dastardly fear of man*. It seems to follow from this, that he affords no proof of faith in Christ who is habitually timid of the world; and the admonition to a professor of that Christian grace is very pertinent—"add to your faith, Virtue." In other words, "Evince your faith by that conduct to which it necessarily prompts,—a fearless profession of it before an unbelieving world,—a rigid avoidance of every sinful practice against a tempting world,—and an inflexible

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observance of Christian maxims and Christian duties, in the face of a persecuting world. If your faith be real, such will be the tenor of your conduct. The one is a principle within; the other, its true, visible, expression before men—add, therefore, to your faith Christian Fortitude."

But in order to a clear, unencumbered, view of the present subject, it may be well to notice, 1st, that Christian Fortitude is not *Apathy*, or habitual insensibility. This is a *vice*; and he who is the subject of it is in a pitiable, not an enviable, case. Apathy is *debility*; Fortitude is *strength* of mind;—Apathy is *lazy*; Fortitude is *active*. Apathy is without enjoyment; Fortitude brings conscious pleasure, in its present exercise, and the joy of triumph, in its issue. The man of habitual insensibility may seem occasionally to pursue his purpose, with great perseverance; and bear the hardships belonging to it, with much constancy; but his seeming perseverance is more properly a listless, insipid, routine; and his constancy, but a brute endurance. He is not very capable of moral distinctions. He is not moved into action, for the defence of the truth, or the defeat of error; neither is he conscious of those generous and pious emotions, which prepare a man to brave every fear, but that of God. Insensibility unfits for nobly doing, or bravely suffering. It is he only who has intellect to make distinctions, sensibility to be impressed with them, and resolution to

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meet them all, in a course of undeviating rectitude, of whom the quality of Christian fortitude can be predicated. Such was Moses, who "feared not the wrath of the Egyptian King; but endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."—Such was Daniel, who regarded not the decree which King Darius had signed against the worship of his God; but "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed; and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."—Such were the Apostles of Christ, who, in executing their heavenly commission, replied to magisterial prohibitions, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye." The sensibility of these devoted men is sufficiently proved from their history; and their magnanimous perseverance in well-doing, shone the more eminently to the glory of God.

2ndly. The Fortitude of the Christian is not *Stoical Indifference*. This state of mind, so called from an ancient sect of philosophers still held in considerable repute, when Paul preached at Athens, consisted in attributing all events to an inevitable fate, and in so annihilating the passions, as never to be moved with either joy or grief. This philosophy taught that it was unworthy of a wise and great man to betray any expression of pain, and affected to reason against the existence of any such sensation. Unnatural and absurd as such a system must appear, it was one of the boasted exhibitions of Pagan wisdom; and it was by men who

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professed it, and taught it, that the enlightened Apostle of the Gentiles was called a "babbler!" But *his* philosophy, or rather, *his* religion, rises above *their* vain imaginations, like the light of heaven, above a glittering meteor of the night.—*His* is the wisdom of God; *theirs*, the folly of dark and bewildered minds. Paul was no Stoic. He felt with peculiar tenderness; nor was he ashamed to express it; but he maintained a firmness and magnanimity, to which that proud school could show no parallel. The religion of Jesus acknowledges and respects the constitution of man. It addresses him as a creature of feelings, both physicial and moral. It seeks not to eradicate, but to regulate, his constitutional principles. It would not annihilate, but sanctify, his passions. Christianity is, indeed, a system which encourages the exercise of the social and finer affections, and has no honourable name to give to a stern, unfeeling, temper of mind. The Christian "rejoices with them that do rejoice, and weeps with them that weep;" while in addressing himself to the service of God, he "confers not with flesh and blood." He is careful to spare others what he willingly endures himself. He is moved at the sufferings of his fellows, and would bear their burdens, if he could; while he advances with an undaunted breast, and a firm, undeviating step, to the tortures and the death his persecutors are preparing for him. The conduct of the Apostle Paul, on a memorable occasion, finely illustrates both the tenderness and the boldness of this Christian quality. When he

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was at Cæsarea, on his way to Jerusalem, his friends, apprised of the danger that awaited him there, besought him with tears that he would not go.—Mark his reply,—"What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus!"

3rdly. Christian Fortitude is not *Obstinacy* of temper. By this term we mean a pertinacious adherence to maxims and practices previously assumed,—or a blind, forward, intrusion of them, in defiance of all reasoning against their utility or truth. There is no greatness of mind in this. It is indiscriminate stubbornness. It is a vice in the temper. A man of this character fixes himself immoveably in every prepossession, however unreasonable; and contumaciously resists the clearest evidence against his folly. This temper is founded on pride and ignorance; Christian fortitude is meek and enlightened. The obstinate man is rash and violent; the intrepid Christian, calm and prudent. The former, is unyielding and sullen; the latter, generous and cheerful. The decided Christian forms his purposes by the rules of wisdom, and proceeds to their execution with deliberate firmness. He has counted the cost of the service in which he is engaged; and when difficulties occur, he is not disheartened; when the trials and terrors of persecution are arrayed against him, he is not shaken or dismayed.—"None of these things," says he, "move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself,

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so that I might finish my course with joy. For whether I live, I live unto the Lord, and whether I die, I die unto the Lord; whether I live, therefore, or die, I am the Lord's."

But while it is granted, that this bold feature was essential to the character of a man of God, in primitive times, and especially to Prophets and Apostles; and that it was also an indispensible quality in the case of many Christians, in the days of persecution; we may, perhaps, be asked, is it a grace essential to Christians of the present day? and is its exercise to be inculcated still on all who profess to believe? We answer—yes. The fortitude of which we speak is an integral part of the Christian character. Wherever a profession of faith is made, there would we reiterate the exhortation of the Apostle, "To your faith add Virtue." The Christian, under whatever circumstances, will find such an exhortation more than pertinent. He will find much of his actual progress, and consequently, of his comfort, depend on its habitual observance. It is in the very nature of the faith he professes, to require such a companionship as that of Fortitude. We live in days, indeed, more enlightened, and therefore, of milder aspect towards the profession and practice of piety, than many that are long since gone by. Religious freedom is now better understood, and more respected. The burden and the heat of the day have been borne by Christians of other times, and our perils are comparatively few.

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Contrasting our condition with that of the Church in earlier ages, we may, indeed, take up the song, "The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places; we have a goodly heritage. We can sit under our own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid." Thanks to the Providence of God for all this! In his fatherly tenderness for the interest of his Church, he has shortened the times of her fiery trial. The wrath of the world against her he has made to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he has restrained. But, advanced as the present age may justly be reckoned in liberality of sentiment, and the science of common rights, it is still true that Christ's disciple is no favourite with the world. The spirit of opposition to the truth is still abroad. Persecution for conscience sake, though restrained from her wilder and more terrific ebullitions, is still in operation. She assumes various forms and is felt in various degrees. The Christian has still need of fortitude, if not to brave imprisonment, or the stake, yet to abide "faithful among the faithless." It is comparatively easy,—it may be pleasant,—even productive of worldly profit, to profess godliness, in the bosom of a congenial neighbourhood. When numbers around us say, "Let us go up unto the house of the Lord," we find it easy to assent; and the pious association may even delight us. But here our faith is without a test. We are not yet proved. We are in the camp of the host of the Lord, and welcomed, perhaps honoured, there, as on the Lord's side. But should we find ourselves surrounded

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by a band of traitors revolting from the cause, and going over to the enemy, we shall then find our Fortitude in requisition. We shall find it needful to stand against, and check the influence of error;—"to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints;"—to be stedfast, immoveable, in days of declension;—to "hold fast the faithful word, as we have been taught, that we may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers."

The Christian may not be called to "resist unto blood," but he will need fortitude to encounter and withstand the spirit and temper of the world. He may require it to resist its *Flattery*. The flatterer is a most insidious foe. He approaches you under the fair aspect, and with the smooth tongue of a friend. Of a sincere and open disposition yourself, perhaps, you suspect him not. Self-love, and the various weaknesses of your nature are on his side.—He gains your confidence, and with that powerful advantage, what, but the grace of God, hinders that he should not accomplish your ruin? You are more especially in danger from this covert enemy, if you are yet young, and of little experience in the Christian life. *You*, then, of that class would we earnestly caution against the seductive arts of the flatterer. Many are the modes by which he seeks to sap the peace and prosperity of your souls. He represents to one, perhaps, how sadly he is altered!—how he used to be the very life and soul of a friendly circle,

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who are now vexed and distressed at the change that has robbed them of him.—He tells him that his friends wonder he should follow a doctrine and a sect every where spoken against—that he has thrown away that conversational and convivial talent with which he used to cheer and delight society—that all are shocked to think that one of his richness of talent and brilliancy of wit, should lose himself, among people of a dull and gloomy character. Then he follows up these fawning remonstrances, with a pressing invitation to rejoin his old companions, and recover his wonted tone of sociability and cheerfulness. In vain will he represent to the flatterer, that what he eulogizes as his former character, he now counts as a just cause of grief, and matter for repentance;—that he is now happy in the knowledge of better things;—and that the time past has been more than sufficient to gratify his own corrupt will and the will of a sinful world. The flatterer will still insist, that the young Christian is mistaken;—that he is misled by ignorant fanatics; or, at least, giving far too much of his time and attention to grave subjects which ought to wait his maturer age. Thus he will court him; and thus it is, in the language of Solomon, that a "flattering tongue worketh ruin."—A Christian will need to add to his faith *Virtue*, to withstand this.

We may find occasion for this Christian Fortitude to withstand *Ridicule*. This has been an instrument of much mischief. On whatever occasion it may be em-

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ployed, t is apt to be keenly felt; and such is the malignity of Vice, that it has in all ages employed it against every form of Virtue. There is nothing good, nothing lovely in the moral world, that has not been made the butt of ridicule. It is, indeed, a weapon which the best characters are the last to employ against any object; and among the bad, it is most commonly found with those of the weakest minds. It seldom fails, however, from its very nature, to wound deeply. It inflicts many bitter sensations at once. We are offended and grieved at the wickedness which prompts it;—we feel our good name exposed to abuse;—we are shocked at the misrepresentation of our motives;—and we are indignant at the insults offered, through us, to a great and a good cause, which we have espoused, and which is dear to our hearts. Hence we find good men complaining of this trial, as of a severe persecution. "Have mercy upon us," cries the Psalmist, "O Lord! have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt! Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." The Apostle, enumerating the sufferings of the ancient martyrs, mentions this with peculiar emphasis. "Others," says he, "had trials of *cruel mockings*."—Need we say that Fortitude, Christian Fortitude, is required for this?

The Christian may have occasion for holy Fortitude against the *Slander* and *Falsehood* of them that hate

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him. The consistent Christian is a living testimony against the vicious. A sinful generation feel themselves rebuked by his temper and conduct. If, therefore, he lives godly in Christ Jesus, he must expect the hatred of the world. They that like not the knowledge of God, nor of his ways, may envy him, but cannot love him. They feel it as a kind of self-defence to slander him. They feel that they cannot otherwise sustain their maxims and their practice, and are driven to the desperate necessity of confounding all moral distinctions.—"They call evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. They justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him." They will speak evil of the Christian, because he runs not to the same excess of riot with them. They will brand every virtue and every grace he possesses with offensive epithets or false appellations. His hope they will stigmatize, as arrogance;—his faith, as mysticism; his humility and forbearance, as pusillanimity and cowardice;—his gravity, as dullness;—his piety, as hypocrisy;—and all his religion, as fanaticism. His very kindness of temper;—his services for mankind;—his going about to do good, they will asperse with the black venom of their reproach, and seek to distort into the ugly forms of prying curiosity, low-mindedness, and selfish designing!—To sustain all this with a Christian spirit requires Fortitude indeed!

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Finally, this Christian fortitude may be required to sustain the *desertion* of friendship,—the *oppression* of power, or the *desolations* of poverty. From neither of these is piety exempt. It not unfrequently exposes to them all. The Psalmist complains to God, in the language of one under a grievous affliction—"Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness; thou hast made me an abomination unto them." And the apostle of the Gentiles had to report, on a certain critical occasion, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." David, whose experience was greatly diversified, frequently alludes to the oppressions he endured—"Hear my prayer, O God! for strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul." Poverty, too, has, in all ages of the world, been the lot of God's people; and it is a condition in life proverbially subject to various and trying calamities. Poverty exposes to the mercy of others; and we well know how little of that grace the world has to show to the poor who belong to Christ. "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor,"—and, "the poor," says Solomon, "is hated even of his own neighbour." Poverty has also its temptations. Agur prays, "Give me not poverty, least I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."—Now, against all these evils nothing can sustain, but the consoling and strengthening influences of the Holy Spirit, who worketh in the Christian that nobility of soul

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with which he passes, unbroken and unbent, through every trial, and who inspires him with the exultations of the Psalmist, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid."

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It remains now, that we press the Apostle's exhortation, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." Let us cultivate in ourselves this dignifying principle of the Christian character. For this purpose, *let self-vigilance be maintained.* Let us watch all the impressions made upon our own minds and hearts, by the circumstances near us, and around us. Our character is insensibly formed in this way. Let us call ourselves, therefore, to a strict scrutiny, as to the source of our opinions and practice. Let us examine them, from time to time. Let not their correctness and purity be taken for granted. Let us see that our authority for what we believe, and what we do, be a "Thus saith the Lord." Let us assure ourselves that our religion is not the result of education, of example, or of party-feeling; and that, when we contend, it is for the faith, as it is in Christ, not for the mere traditions of men; and that our zeal in contending springs not from a desire of confounding our opponents, or of defending a sect, or of upholding opinions because they are our own; but of promoting the glory of God, in the defence of his truth and the welfare of man. When we can clearly deduce our rules of faith and practice

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from the word of God, and can trace their transforming power upon ourselves, our confidence will be without pride, and our courage without rashness. We shall feel ourselves identified with the cause of the Gospel; and should we be "reproached for the name of Christ, we shall think ourselves happy; for the spirit of glory will rest upon us. On the part of the world, he will be evil spoken of; but on our part he will be glorified."

To enliven this holy fortitude, let us *cherish frequent recollections of the Redeemer's grace and love to us.* Let him and his doings for us, be the most frequent and most delightful meditations of our hearts. Let us think, and think deeply, of the cost of our redemption;—think *from* what the Redeemer has rescued us, and *to* what he has restored us. This will kindle in us a love to him which many waters shall not quench. Love is the strongest incentive to action; and if the love of Christ glow in our bosoms, it will constrain us to all that is good, to all that is great in his cause. The constraining power of love is the purest and noblest of all. A sense of duty will do much with an ingenious mind; but love will do more. It is the ruling principle in heaven; and when it stimulates us to obedience, we share the delights the Angels know in their sublimer service. It is but to realize the fact that "we are not our own, that we are bought with a price," and we shall rejoice to "glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are his."

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In fine, let Christians cherish the grace of fortitude by *every consideration suggested in the word of God.* Let them not forget whence all their strength must be derived. It is laid up in Him only who trod the wine-press of God's wrath for them; who, to accomplish their salvation, put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. In *his* strength only are they strong. Their confidence is warranted only so far as his Spirit aids them. Let them wait, then, in prayer before him: let them seek to be "strengthened with might by his Spirit, in the inner man." It was thus that the Apostle felt himself adequate to his arduous calling. "I can do all things," says he, "through Christ who strengtheneth me." Let Christians make him, in like manner, their dependance. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart."—Let them never lose sight of the *aims* they have. The Christian is one who professedly enters on an arduous service. His Master's work requires him both to do and to suffer. He has works of faith and labours of love to perform; and the name he professes should ever urge him to perseverance. His service is a warfare; and he is called to "endure hardness as a good Soldier of Christ." It was the advice of an ancient philosopher to his disciples, "Think on every occasion, *I am a philosopher.*"—How infinitely more admonitory and inspiring ought the believers reflections to be, *I am a Christian!* How should this consideration banish fear! What can the world present to intimidate

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him? "Greater is He that is in him, than he that is in the world." When Nehemiah had endangered his life in the service of God, he thought of the character he sustained, and exclaimed, "shall such a man as I flee?" The Christian has the same high character to sustain. Let him think of the example his Lord has left him, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Let him consider also, for the encouragement of his fortitude, the ample promises afforded him against every trial. His Master hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Let the follower of Christ consider also that he is fully committed in the service of Christ. He is bound to go forward by all the terrors denounced against apostacy, and all the encouragements held out to perseverance. "If any draw back," God says, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him;"—and if through the fear of man, he deny Christ before them, he has declared, that he will deny him before his Father who is in heaven. But to stimulate him to Christian endurance and fortitude, he is assured that "God is faithful, who will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that he may be able to bear it." He says to every disciple what he says to his Church in general, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

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These are considerations well calculated to inspire the firm resolve, to expel fear from the heart, and to steel it with holy confidence.—Go, then, Christian, in all the high and ennobling attributes of your character; secure that you can meet with nothing so formidable to your proper interests, as to baffle your resources. Those resources are treasured up for you in a covenant of which God is the party engaged to supply them. His Holy Spirit is with you, to teach you *when* and *how* to obtain every needful grace, and to render that grace available to your enjoyment and defence. Through this Spirit the throne of God is ever accessible; and when *He* brings you thither, your suit will not be refused. Through this Spirit you feel your near relationship to God. As one of his family, you are privileged with his favourable ear:—you ask and you receive, and your joy is full!—Go in the strength of your heavenly Father;—in the faith and love of your Redeemer; in the enlightening and cheering influences of the Spirit of Truth. Go, undaunted, into whatever service your engagements call you; for you are not alone.—Omnipotence is with you.—Go, unrepining, into whatever trial is sent you, assured that "neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, shall separate you from the love of Christ; but that, in all these things, you shall be more than a conqueror through Him that hath loved you."

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CHAPTER VI.

KNOWLEDGE.

The principle of Fortitude in the Christian, needful and noble as it is, must go hand in hand with KNOWLEDGE. We may have noticed in some men an immoveable obstinacy of temper, exemplified in a blind, unreasoning, tenacity of their own opinions and pursuits. This, we have seen, is not the *Virtue* recommended by our Apostle. The firm, unyielding, bravery of the Christian is linked, on the one hand, with *Faith*, and on the other, with *Knowledge*.—"His heart is *fixed*," because "he trusts in the Lord."—He "*knows* whom he has believed," and therefore, "he is not ashamed." His Faith gives vigour, and his knowledge, correctness to the resolves of his heart. His zeal is not chargeable with rashness, nor his Fortitude with obstinacy. The basis of his decision and fixedness of character is laid in knowledge. Hence the superior beauty and dignity of christian conduct. It is a course of life traced, indeed, on earth, but by a hand in heaven. It is a correct and straight course, amid many devious and crooked ways. It is a pure and an elevated path, amid numerous low and polluted

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tracts;—it is calm and peaceful, amid turbulence and strife.—It is a course distinguished by its holy light, from the ways of darkness around it. Now, it is the Knowledge with which the Christian is gifted, that either immediately originates, or greatly promotes, these honourable distinctions. The enlightened views which he is enabled to direct to every object, suggest to him the wisest and the noblest motives, and lead him to those good works that glorify God. It is in the exercise of this Knowledge that "he walks in the light."

Knowledge is the eye of the soul. The necessity and excellence of this grace are, therefore, evident. But it is true, there are many varieties of knowledge, and it is important to ascertain what this variety is to which we ascribe such excellence. It may be presumed, indeed, that the Apostle would not rank any species of knowledge among the Christian graces that is not of the highest order. We remark, then, that the Knowledge here intended is distinguished from all others by the term *Spiritual*. It has special reference to spiritual objects, and spiritual purposes. But we may further and more particularly observe, that this Knowledge, as it regards its peculiar qualities, is, 1. *Divine*—having God for its origin and object. 2. *Sanctifying*—conforming the mind and heart to the will of God. 3. *Blissful*—leading unerringly to the enjoyment of God.

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1. In stating, the first quality of this Knowledge to be *Divine*, as coming from God, we intend not the absolute exclusion of other Knowledge from this high origin. All Knowledge is derived from God. He is the giver of intellect to all his intelligent creatures. Every power of the mind is his production. Our acquisition of Knowledge, therefore, in any of its departments, is from God, as all its inlets are from him. He constructed our every organ of sensation; and endowed us with every power of perception. It is He, in the language of the Psalmist, "who planted the ear; who formed the eye, and who teacheth man Knowledge."

Far less will it be supposed, that we mean to treat with indiscriminate contempt, or cast a character of equal worthlessness upon, every other variety of Knowledge. It is the property of the mind to *know*. Ignorance is the rank and rude state of the mind; Knowledge is its cultivation.—Ignorance is disgraceful; Knowledge is honourable. "For the soul to be without knowledge is not good." We respect and honour that class of people however humble their condition in life, whose skill in Mechanism and the arts in general administers to the conveniences and comforts of society. They form a department of the community indispensable to its civilization and prosperity. Theirs is a creditable species of knowledge, which every honest mind encourages, and to which our Bible not unfrequently

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adverts, in terms of respect and even of encomium. Moses speaks of workmen possessing this Knowledge, as *wise-hearted* men, whom God had filled with his Spirit, in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, &c." We honour Scholarship, and all that is deservedly called Science, as contributing to strengthen the energies, and enrich the capacities of the human mind, and to ennoble and adorn our intellectual nature. It cannot but be interesting and instructive to a thinking mind to contemplate one redeeming from oblivion and loss the treasures of past times and past generations of men, and enriching a living generation with them;—and another teaching us how to judge of those treasures; to cull whatever is most precious among them, and improve them to our own advantage. Assuredly our admiration and gratitude are deservedly claimed by that skill which unseals the records of wisdom and genius out of whatever age and whatever dialect among men, and, by conveying them through a medium of interpretation familiar to ourselves, makes them our own. It is the service of this skill that has been employed to pour into the diversified languages of the earth the treasures of the Word of God, and to sanctify, as it were, the tongues of men, in all their varied articulations, with the oracles of heavenly truth. And much do we owe to Science, whose cautious researches through the dominions of matter and of mind

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have vastly enlarged the circle of our real Knowledge, and by whose light the enemies of human improvement, rude Ignorance, gloomy Superstition, and ancient Barbarism, are scared away. Many men who have distinguished themselves by their literary and scientific attainments have been our benefactors; and not a few of these have been also burning and shining lights in the church of Christ. These were men whose minds were peculiarly susceptible of the attractions of literature; but who were yet made to feel the pre-eminent claims of the Gospel; and who even turned their talents, and the results of their studies to the interests of religious truth. Their incursions of inquiry into the privacies of nature did not seduce them from the God of nature. From these incursions they returned with loftier sentiments of his adorable attributes, and deeper impressions of man's obligations to his care and munificence.—To these departments of Knowledge, therefore,—to useful skill, and true Science, we willingly give their due mead of praise.

But the Knowledge of which we now speak is paramount. It is not only more excellent than all others; but is independant of all others. It is not contrary to right Knowledge of other kinds; but it is alone adequate with, or without, other Knowledge, to man's real happiness. It is indispensable, for this purpose, to men of every condition; to the rich, as well as to the poor; to the learned, as well as to the unlearned—to a New-

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ton, as much as to a Hottentot. Now this Knowledge is, in its very nature, derivable only from God, and is, therefore, rightly styled *divine*. All Knowledge is obtained through its appropriate channel. Early tuition, subsequent observation, and daily experience of the world, teach many men all that they know. Spiritual Knowledge is taught of God. It is this which brings the mind into contact with the things of the Spirit of God—things which the natural man receiveth, i. e. *understandeth*, not.—They are foolishness to such a man; "neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned," or, discerned only *by the communications of the Holy Spirit*. The Apostle, on the divine origin of spiritual Knowledge reasons conclusively, when he says, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"—Who among us knows the thoughts of his neighbour? who can look into the heart of another man, and discern what is passing there?—can tell his feelings, his motives, his purposes?—Are they not hidden from every mortal ken, but his own?—and is it not impossible to know them, till he has himself revealed them? "Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."—We have no intimate knowledge of the mind and will of God, by means within ourselves—it is his own Spirit only who can, and does, reveal them. It is only that power at whose bidding the natural light first shone out of darkness, that shines into the heart of man to give him the light of the Knowledge of the glory of

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God, in the face of Jesus Christ. When the darkness of chaos was to be dispersed, and the confused elements of the shapeless mass were to be called up into harmony, beauty and splendor, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and there was light.—He moved, and a lovely and a cheerful transformation instantly took place. In like manner descends the same Spirit, agreeably to the promise of the Redeemer; and, moving on the chaos of the sinner's dark and alienated mind, diffuses through all its powers that gracious light, which displays a just God reconciling him to himself, through the mediation of his own Son. This illumination can break from no other source than the Father of lights. It comes with an energy that no other light possesses; and it has to do that which no other light can accomplish. It has to penetrate the native darkness of the human heart—a darkness which baffles, and has always baffled, the operation of the finest philosophy upon it. It has to make its way through the gloomiest regions of ignorance, to penetrate the thick walls of prejudice; and to enter, as it were, the tomb of the soul, and awaken her from death to life. But this is not all;—like the fire that fell from heaven on the sacrifices of old, and sent thence a sweet smelling savour back again to the Lord, this heavenly light—this spiritual Knowledge, has to lighten the awakened soul, through many wonderful discoveries of the truth, upward to God and his glory. All this sufficiency can only be of God. The Knowledge which He communicates is alone adequate

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to these effects. Coming from God, it developes the things of God. It opens the eyes of the mind, and the man beholds wondrous things out of the Divine law. Of that law he had entertained his own opinions before; but the entrance of this Knowledge gives him light to see, at once, the odiousness of his errors, and the loveliness of truth. His Knowledge of this law, it may be, was before speculatively correct. He perceived and acknowledged the truth of God's word, and assented to the scheme of the Gospel, as "worthy of all acceptation," and could, perhaps, defend its peculiar revelations with casuistical dexterity.—But this Knowledge does infinitely more.—It brings him into personal connexion with the whole. He now feels what before he only theorized; and what before he fluently described, he is now become. In the expressive language of Scripture, before "he was *Darkness*; but now is he *Light* in the Lord."

We are hence led to what we called the *Second* quality of spiritual Knowledge.

2. It is *Sanctifying*, as it conforms the mind and heart to the will of God. This Knowledge, emanating from so high a source, has purposes of a correspondently wise, great, and lofty character. It is not intended for the mere cultivation of intellect, that its possessor may attract the admiration of his fellow-men to his mental superiority;—it is not given for the merely de-

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lightful exercise of the imagination on beautiful and sublime ideas; nor to send a man, with the enthusiasm of a devotee, away from his kind, into secrecy and solitude, for abstract contemplation and silent musings. Its object is worthy of Him who inspires it. It is given as an operative principle, to result in the glory of God and the good of man. It descends not into the mind to light the votary of science through the visible and the invisible, the lofty and the profound, of philosophical research;—to elevate him to another and another eminence of human wisdom, till it place him on the very pinnacle of intellectual ambition.—No; its tendency is, indeed, to elevate,—but to attainments of greater worth; and to gratify,—but a purer and holier, ambition. The Knowledge of the Christian, in its influential and practical character, resolves itself into *true Wisdom*. That Knowledge has certainly an exclusive right to such a title, which leads a man *by the best means* to the *best end*. Now, spiritual Knowledge leads the Christian by the best means, to his highest dignity and completest happiness. Those means are specified and explained in the word of God, and the Christian, in the light of this Knowledge, finds them there, pursues them with increasing ardour, maintains his progress in them, and, not reckoning his ultimate object, at any time, attained, he reaches forth unto those things that are still before, "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The whole tenour of God's word shows this

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Knowledge to be progressive—"Grow in grace," enjoins the apostle, "and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This Knowledge grows *expansively*,—The perceptions of the Christian are more and more enlarged by repeated communications of the Spirit to his mind. It grows *intensively*;—he is more and more powerfully impressed with his personal obligations and with the practical bearing of every revelation enjoyed. Taught of God, he increases in clearness of discernment, in depth of conviction, and consequent submission to the authority of the truth. His Knowledge terminates not in mere information. All the propositions of the Gospel with which he is acquainted may, indeed, be known by others, who are nevertheless strangers to their power.—*His* Knowledge is "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power;"—*theirs*, the faith which "stands in the wisdom of men, and in the letter of the law." *His* is light from the Author of the word, reflecting it warmly upon his mind and heart;—*theirs*, the result of natural sagacity, and of reason at work in its usual way. *He* is like one who hears his commission delivered, understands it, and proceeds to fulfil it;—*they* are those who hear, and understand, and neglect to obey.

To be more particular on the influence and operation of spiritual Knowledge, we remark, that it necessarily leads its Possessor to *fear* God. No one accustomed to read his Bible can have failed to observe how repeat-

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edly, and how pointedly, the *fear of God* is there represented as a primary feature of the Christian character. Primary as to time;—it is more than once stated to be the *beginning* of wisdom; and primary as to *importance*.—"The *fear* of the Lord is the fountain of life;" and "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This fear is in the Christian a *filial* affection. It is that reverential apprehension of God's moral character which he has obtained through grace, and under the impression of which he seeks to fulfil the whole will of God. The majesty and holiness of the divine Legislator stands revealed to his mind in so powerful a manner, as to engender an habitual fear of offending, even in thought. And the Spirit of adoption, revealing this glorious Being in the gracious and endearing capacity of a Father, and bearing witness with his Spirit that he is a child and an heir of God, calls into action those dutiful tempers, those amiable dispositions, those warm affections, which bind him to obedience, and make it his delight. Nothing does a dutiful child hold so imperative as the will of his Father; nothing so dilates his heart with delight, as the smile of his approbation. Even so, the enlightened Christian is desirous of "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;" and "filled with the Knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, it is his aim to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God."

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Hence we remark again, that this Knowledge is inseparable from the *love* of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." This gracious affection is so far from being incompatible with the *fear* of God, of which we have been speaking, that it is necessary to its right exercise. Christian fear is not that which has torment in it.—Such a fear is, in other terms, a *slavish terror*, which begets aversion. The Christian's fear is blended with love. His view of God is that of a spiritual Father, "glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises," and he fears him with a fear of reverence and esteem; but of a Father also, who has lavished upon him the expressions of a mercy, a tenderness, a love, so peculiarly impressive, that he loves him in return with a love of gratitude, prompting him to obedience. The operation, indeed, of these two principles is, for the most part, simultaneous in the heart of the Christian. His language is, "Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!—O, love the Lord, all ye his saints!"—And that was a genuine burst of this mingled emotion, when the disciple Thomas exclaimed, as he looked on his risen Saviour, "My God and my Lord!"

This spiritual Knowledge, as it necessarily leads to the *fear* of God, and is inseparable from the *love* of God, must also, as we have already hinted, result in the *obedience* of God. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to

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walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind." Our Lord himself makes obedience the test of love—"If ye love me," he says, "keep my commandments. If a man love me, he will keep my words." He cannot, therefore, know God aright who denies the law to be a rule of duty to Christians, or asserts that their transgressions of it are not sinful. The enlightened Christian never considers the law of God as abrogated, in *his* case; neither is he disposed to plead an exemption from its obligations. He knows that the law is holy, just, and good; that it is a transcript of God's moral character, to which he is "predestinated to be conformed;" and that the law of God is not "made void," but "established through faith" in Christ. He knows, and rejoices to know, that he is delivered from the law, as a covenant of works; but he feels himself, therefore, under a stronger obligation to observe it, as a rule of righteousness; he laments his every transgression of it, as aggravated by the grace displayed in his redemption. His release from its condemnatory power is an act of grace that binds him in the strongest manner to the obedience of love; and he delights in the scriptural language of genuine Christians, "Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The believer acknowledges himself, like Paul, to be "dead, indeed, to the law," so far as to any hope of justification through the works of the

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law; but he adds, that he is *thus* dead, "that he may live unto God." It is to his pride, to his self-righteousness, to his boastful arrogance, he has died; while he is alive to humility, to hope, to faith, to love, to grateful obedience,—"He is not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." There is not, and cannot be, any other rule of human conduct, but the moral law which God has given; and through divine tuition the Christian perceives in it the character of immaculate purity, and perfect, immutable, wisdom. In so much, therefore, as there can be nothing so holy, nothing so wise, he knows that it can be superseded by no other. In this the Christian is fully instructed. His object is not to get rid of moral obligations. He has not so learned Christ. He considers him not as come to destroy the law, and deliver his people from it, as from an enemy; but to fulfil it for them, in its every demand.—And the Christian knows that the Saviour did not thus fulfil the law, to rescue him only from its curse, but from that also which brings its curse; —not from penalty only, but from sin also, which subjects him to it; and that he not only suffered as his atonement, but that he "left him also an example that he should follow his steps." Far then, very far, is the Knowledge of the Christian from setting him above the obligations of personal holiness. The more intimately he knows Christ, the more he admires his moral excellences, and desires to learn of him, and "to purify himself, even as *he* is pure." As he obtains a clearer

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discernment of the true nature of Christ's atonement, he is more deeply impressed with the odious character of sin;—as he more nearly contemplates the greatness of his sufferings, he is more sensibly alive to that heart-constraining remonstrance of God against it, "O, do not this abominable thing which I hate!"—And the more he knows of the love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, the more devotedly does his heart respond to the appeal of his Saviour, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends, *if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"

The enlightened Christian feels that whatever belongs to the moral character is within the province of the law of God. He acknowledges all that he is, and all that he has to be divine property. He seeks, therefore, to be conformed to the will of God in all things; and to glorify him in the devotion of his heart and life. Now, the Knowledge which the Spirit of God communicates leads him to the principle from which all the law is fulfilled—that of *love*. He finds the whole simply and beautifully comprised in the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And what does the Christian learn from this announcement, but that his religion includes both Tables of the Law?—that while he is bound to God in duties of the highest order, he has social and relative

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duties also, which, with equal sincerity, he must render to his neighbour;—that piety towards his God, and benevolence towards men, are enjoined by the same authority;—and that the Gospel of Christ does not profess to prepare him for the happiness and glory of the future state, by discharging him from the obligations of equity and charity which bind him to his fellow-men in the present state. The Christian acting in character has respect to the law in all its amplitude. He feels it too impressively written on his heart, to question any of its claims to his obedience; and he is fully aware, that while he honours God by his public and private devotions, he is to glorify him also, not only by a diligent and exemplary attention to whatever is exacted of him by the interests of society, but also by indulging the minuter sympathies and charities to which his relation with his kind may give occasion. It is evident then, that the Christian must entertain this broad and liberal view of the mind and will of God, when conformity thereto is made his aim.—And to this entire conformity a disposition is given him. Hence the lively and expressive description which an Apostle gives us of the many kind and amiable qualities of Christian wisdom; "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

3. We pass now to what we specified as the *Third* grand quality of Christian Knowledge,—it is *blissful*,

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as it leads unerringly to the enjoyment of God. This is the consummation of all human improvement, the benevolent end of all moral training. This constitutes, at once, our highest possible dignity, our most finished happiness. For this sin having totally unfitted us, and driven us far from it, the whole scheme of the Gospel is but an economy of restoration. The darkness of an alienated state conceals from man the only true source of his enjoyment. In such a state, he seeks in vain for that happiness which suits his nature and fills the desires of his soul, because he seeks not God—"Having his understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart," he could never have found the way to his true enjoyment, but through the grace of God himself, who, in pity, made the way, and sent his Spirit to light him to it. All other lights but divine light have failed, and must for ever fail, of this end. God hath sent the light of his word into the world, which reveals the purposes of his grace to erring man; but that light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, till his Spirit gather up the rays, and send them home with power to the benighted soul. It is with this powerful light the Christian has found his way to God, and to true enjoyment. From the moment his natural darkness is expelled, and he is made to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, his peace is begun. A sense of sin, while the Saviour is unknown, is ever oppressive. The sinner

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only thus far awakened, is tossed with tempest, and not comforted; but when the Spirit opens the eyes of his mind, he is "led by a way he knew not;"—he is led to the Cross of Christ. It is then he sees his sins atoned for, and his reconciliation effected. And he sees all this done in a way that astonishes, yet convinces—humbles, yet relieves—and awes, yet delights him! While the Spirit shows him this great sight, his astonishment is the astonishment of pleasure; his acquiescence in the wonderous plan, is a cheerful acquiescence; and his acceptance of the Saviour is an embrace of faith, and love, and joy—And, O, what a source of enjoyment to the anxious soul is this discovery!—to see the penalty endured, the guilt removed, the enemy conquered, righteousness fulfilled, the law satisfied, God well pleased, and heaven and all its glories opened for him by his triumphant Redeemer! A near and appropriating view of these facts fills his heart with gladness. He delights to meditate upon them; and as he follows on to know the Lord, his joys increase and his mouth opens to songs of praise,—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." The basis of his enjoyment is well laid. It is in the faithfulness of a God who cannot deceive;—in the ability of a Saviour mighty to save;—in a covenant never to be broken; and in the light and consolations of the Spirit, that guides him into all truth, and supplies him with every grace. The Christians portion

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is rich and large. No good thing can he need which is not secured to him. He may, indeed, and he often does, through the imperfections of his nature, lose sight of its fulness and freeness. There are seasons when the difficulties and the dangers of the way amaze him,—when his faith is weakened,—when "his heart is faint, and his eyes are dim." The enemy, on these occasions, perceives his halting, and exclaims, "Where is now thy God?" Under such circumstances he is inevitably distressed; and this distress he is often permitted to experience for wise and gracious purposes. His propensity to self complacency is thus often rebuked; a deeper sense of his own weakness is obtained; his vigilance against every temptation is roused; his constant need of repentance, and of every gracious supply more impressed upon him; and communion with God more endeared to his soul. Thus, even his most distressful moments are often made the means of more strongly propelling him on his way. As a child of God his seed abideth in him, and he cannot rest in the absence of his Heavenly Father. In seasons of darkness, therefore, he is borne with greater urgency to the throne of grace. There, with renewed frequency and importunity, he plies his suit.—He cries with David, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." From the depth of these distresses, and from the exercises on which they put him, he comes forth more invigorated, bearing the

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fruits of the Spirit in greater freshness, and better acquainted than before with himself, with the devices of Satan, and with his resources in the love and faithfulness of God. His varied experience, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, promotes him from one attainment to another. It is thus he is led to know the kind and value of every supply his every exigency requires; and in the changeableness of his present state feels how essential to his better interests it is to ask and to receive, out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace. The Christian then, is a happy man. However painful, however mortifying, his case may often appear, his real enjoyments greatly out-balance his present afflictions. Could the gay and giddy throng of this world's votaries but properly appreciate his case, how justly might they envy him. Alas, for that they have no faculty! His joys and sorrows are of a class to which they can apply no rule of judgment. When they attempt it, they apply a wrong rule, and judge falsely. Hence all the ignorant conclusions to which they come respecting him and his sacred cause; hence the unjust censures, the proud taunts, the cruel calumnies, which they fling, from their darkness and malice, at a character they do not, and cannot, comprehend. But the Knowledge of the Christian sets him on vantage ground. He can judge of *them*, and *their* condition. Once he was one of them, and walked according to *their* course. Enlightened now, and elevated by the quickening power of the Spirit, into "heavenly places in

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Christ Jesus," he looks down with pity on their hollow joys, their unavailing grief, their baseless hopes, and lying refuges. His better Knowledge enables *him* to judge rightly of all this.—The distance and the gloom of that alienation from God in which *they* live, incapacitates them to judge the Christian.—As well might an inhabitant of earth presume to detail the economy of another planet's population. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

The Christian's enjoyment of God will encrease with his Knowledge. We do not say that the ratio of increase will be uniform. Many causes contribute to mar and interrupt his enjoyments.—This, we have seen, is unavoidable, and even useful. But we say, that as he advances in the study and comprehension of divine things; and especially in his discernment of the life of God in his own soul, his ground of enjoyment becomes clearer and more extended, and his capacity for it proportionably enlarged. On this principle is expressed the Apostle's salutation, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the Knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord;" as also the language of the Psalmist, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." The very progress of the mind in Knowledge is delightful. The labour of acquisition, as every student of science tells us, is itself a pleasure. But grand and beautiful as the subjects of Christian Knowledge are, it is not in spe-

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culative advances in the study of such things that he who is taught of the Spirit has placed his reward. His Knowledge makes him acquainted with God, and brings him into communion with him. He delights in the law of the Lord, because he feels its influence, and walks in its light.—"Through thy precepts," he says, "I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." He delights in contemplating and searching into the wonders of the Gospel; but it is because they have been made the power of God unto his salvation. He delights in the various means of advancing in spiritual Knowledge; for in them he seeks God, and finds his strength renewed. The illuminations which the Holy Spirit promotes within him, lead him, from time to time, to those exercises and to those places where God has promised to meet him;—to the diligent and devout perusal of his own oracles, as one who loves to hear, again and again, the gracious words that proceed from the lips of the Redeemer, or to take orders from the mouth of the Lord himself, whom it is his desire to serve;—to secret meditation, that he may withdraw his thoughts from the bustle of the world, and concentrate them, with the greater relish, on the things which his soul prefers;—to prayer, as one who longs to hold converse with his God! to pour out before him the desires of his heart; to tell him his fears and his doubts, that they may be removed; to make confession, that pardon through his Intercessor may be obtained; and to make known his wants, that they may be supplied;—

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and to the social ordinances of divine worship, that his spiritual life may be nourished in the feasts of grace provided there; and that he may realize the promise of a faithful God, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

But the Knowledge with which the Christian is distinguished, procures him his present enjoyments, only as earnests of the infinitely pure and exalted bliss of his Heavenly Inheritance. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The Christian's Knowledge here is but partial, and his enjoyments partake of its imperfections;—in Heaven his Knowledge will not only be purified from all liability to error, but sublimed and enlarged, like that of the higher orders of being; and his enjoyments will be commensurate with it; "for all things will then be his." He now sees but darkly, as through a glass; but then face to face. He is now in the rudiments of likeness to his Saviour;—he will then be brought to perfect conformity; for he will see him as he is. Here, his study of divine things is cramped and limited by the feeble faculties of a body impaired by sin and disease;—then, his intellectual acquisitions will be vastly and delightfully facilitated by the organs of a spiritual body, corresponding in its perfections with those of his mind. Here, the Christian is in his minority, thinking as a child, speaking as a child, and

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reasoning as a child;—in his heavenly inheritance, he is of full age, matured in all his powers; with matter and with scope around him more than adequate to their most vigorous application, and that for ever; and there, too, his attainments in glory and in bliss will be continually progressive;—his capacities for ever expanding,—new objects of study for ever opening,—new discoveries for ever making,—new wonder and new praise for ever excited; and his whole being for ever refining, rising and expatiating, in the infinity of the uncreated mind.

From this view of the nature and happy tendency of the Christian's Knowledge, it must appear to be of the highest importance to his present and his future interests, to cultivate it in himself with all possible diligence. Rich are the privileges with which he is now invested, and it becomes him to study them well, that he may the better appreciate them. Great and glorious are the objects of his anticipations, and they invite him to examine and contemplate them with a closer and a closer eye. Many votaries of human science have given striking examples of successful diligence, in their generation. "Now, *they* did it to obtain a corruptible crown;"—the Christian has in view "an incorruptible one." *Their* ambition is to have honour one of another,—a perishable glory. *His* object, the honour that cometh from God,—the inheritance of immortality! Comparatively vain as their pursuits may be, let the Christian imitate their ardour. Like them, let him

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put forth all the energies of his mind; let him give his days and his nights to the study; let him avail himself of every lawful aid; let him watch every favourable moment, and make it turn to his account; knowing, all the while, that the Master he serves "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

But if he would succeed in the pursuit of spiritual Knowledge, let him be admonished to cultivate spirituality of mind. He must ever consider his study as the pursuit of eternal life. His affections must be set on things above. Worldly and carnal objects must be held in subjection; and the master-current of his soul must set towards the ocean of heavenly realities. To obtain this happy bias of the mind, he must seek the constant aid of the Holy Spirit. This is indispensable; and this to the humble, devout, and persevering applicant will not be denied. Then will he find the light of heaven break upon his way, the rough places of which will be made smooth, and the crooked straight, by his all-sufficient Guide; and God will fulfil in his experience the gracious promise, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart unto understanding; yea, if thou criest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God."

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CHAPTER VII.

TEMPERANCE.

THE subject of the preceding chapter, considered as a Characteristic of the Christian, shows him in the light of one peculiarly honoured and happy. And assuredly, if to be an heir of God, and joint heir with his Son Jesus Christ, be dignity; and if to be rescued from the greatest possible evil, and possessed of the greatest possible good, be happiness, then is the Christian the happiest and most dignified character among men. He is redeemed from the power and penalty of sin, the greatest of evils; and made partaker of the divine nature, the greatest possible good. Taught of God, he aims at higher honours and more substantial bliss than earth affords. His illuminations have correctly informed him on two points of vital importance;—the utter futility of this world's possessions, in the matter of his substantial interests,—and his absolute dependance, for the security of those interests, on the love of God in Christ Jesus. His enlightened views induce a habit of spirituality. He chooses God for his portion, and his motto is "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." But our Apostle knew that the

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Christian, in his present state, was still imperfect; that the world and the flesh were opposed to his better purpose; that, in every stage of his progress, instruction, admonition and warning, were required; that, even in his happiest moments, and when exulting in the review of his numerous and precious privileges, it was needful to remind him that here is not his rest. Looking, therefore, at the difficulties which every Christian has, more or less, to encounter,—difficulties arising not more from the frowning hostility of the world, than from its anxious cares and ensnaring allurements, he recommends the exercise of TEMPERANCE. It requires no great depth of sagacity to perceive that this is an admonition justified by every day's experience. The follower of Christ, while in the body, is at no time set loose from the law of Temperance. The moment he relaxes from it, is the moment of his weakness; and the moments of the Christian's weakness are those of his special danger. Enemies of every shape, and of every mode of insinuation and attack, lie in ambush about his path. They are of that manifold description as to suit every avenue of his heart; and, as any one of them shall be found not duly guarded, some appropriate foe makes his ready entrance by it, to the Christian's disquiet, and often to his shame. Now, the grace of the Spirit most precisely adapted to preserve him against such discomfiture, is Temperance. This, we think, will appear sufficiently obvious to any one, who considers how very intimately, and how very widely,

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this grace of the Christian interferes with his concerns. It claims possession of him in all the departments of his being. He must allow its restraining and regulating influence on the secret imaginations of his heart, as well as on the audible words of his tongue and the visible doings of his life. It occupies all the passes to his soul; it stands as a guard at every vulnerable point. The enemy, to make an impression must master his Temperance. But while this grace is in exercise, he succeeds in resisting the Devil, and he flies from him." And that the grace of Temperance is essential to the Christian's success against temptation, is repeatedly intimated in the word of God. "Every man," says Paul, "that striveth for the mastery is *temperate* in all things." To the same purpose is the admonition of Peter, "Be *sober*, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

It is hardly necessary to observe that the word *Temperance* properly denotes *Self-command*, or the power of duly regulating and governing the passions and appetites, and of refraining from the indulgence of the flesh and sense. Now, we do not deny that we are frequently met with laudable exhibitions of Temperance in the lives of many men, who nevertheless know not God. There is a natural indifference or even dislike, in the constitutions of some people, to improprieties and vices to which others are prone.—And the force of superior education, the sense of decorums belonging

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to their rank, the laws of delicacy and good-breeding, are found to operate powerfully on the politer circles of society, to maintain, at least, the show of this virtue. But we stop not to weigh the degree of credit due to such exhibitions. We speak now of a *Christian* Characteristic,—of a Temperance resulting from a better nature, and from higher motives. It is to Christians in general that the Apostle addresses the admonition, "Add to your Knowledge Temperance." He supposes no case where it is not needful. He pays no compliment to constitutional, or other circumstantial differences; intending nothing less in what he urges, than the cultivation of a spiritual grace. It is clearly with the greatest propriety that this admonition is directed universally to all Christians. The Apostle well knew, as every enlightened mind must know, that no advantages of natural disposition, or educational training, can guarantee a virtuous life. He knew that the negative excellences of many men, who happen to be exempt from powerful temptations, are apt to hold them in the snares of self-confidence, and fatal security; and that Christians themselves, though instructed in the deceitfulness of the human heart, have need of frequent warning against it.

Assuming the topic, then, as connected with the Christian character, we will confine ourselves to some brief remarks on the nature and utility of Temperance, in the three grand departments of the Thoughts,—the Words,—and the Actions. Within these three depart-

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ments will be found every thing for which a man is accountable; as these form all the relations in which he stands to the law of GOD.

I. The THOUGHTS have the *Heart* for their region. There they are continually coming into birth,—growing, changing, mingling with, and succeeding to, each other. The impressions they make, and the consequences following them, are necessarily various, according to their respective characters, and the indulgence they, more or less, receive from the will. Now these incessant fluctuations of thought are going on within every man, in darkness and secrecy impenetrable by his fellow-men. So long, therefore, as the thought remains within, unattested by any outward and overt expression, it renders not the man amenable to *human* judgment. But "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. He understandeth our thought afar off." God takes cognizance of the heart and all its motions. His judgment of man is not from the uncertain evidence of words spoken and deeds done, but from the state of the heart, where the precise character is found. In reference to God's judgment, "as the man thinketh in his heart, so is he."—It follows that the utmost importance attaches to the regulation of our hearts;—that it is not enough, that what is evil in them runs not out into words or actions; but that we are bound to respect the law of God in the most secret movement of the soul.

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"Guard well your thoughts,—our thoughts are heard in heaven."

David, in his last solemn charge to his son, inculcates the same lesson, when he enjoins him to "serve the Lord with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; "for the Lord," says he, "searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." And that son, afterwards so highly distinguished for his wisdom, has left this advice among his choicest sayings, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Nothing, however, is so apt to evade every attempt at control or regulation, as the operation of thought; and it is, we apprehend, but stating the common experience, to say that the thoughts and imaginations of the human mind, are too generally left to their own roaming, however, extravagant, and to their own shapes and associations, however vain and sinful. The Christian feels, from this natural impatience of restraint, that vigilance over the heart is ever necessary;—that it is a department of so much consequence and so much difficulty, that he dare not trust its government to any power less than Divine; and that it is incumbent upon him, at all times, to seek and to cherish that temperate frame of mind which is the fruit of the Spirit.

On this part of our subject let it be remarked,

1st. That the Christian is bound to watch against every harsh and intemperate thought in reference to *God*. He is not unfrequently tempted to sin in this way. He finds himself, perhaps, ill at ease under the

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pressure of some untoward event, or of some personal indisposition. The vigour of his mind abates, and the enemy seizing the time of debility, plies him with the fiery darts of doubts, and fears, and heartless despondings. He strives, it may be, against those feelings. He is conscious that they do not consist with a strong and lively faith, and he is impatient of their continuing to work within him. But God, who humbles, in order to exalt; and agitates, in order to establish, relieves him not under his impatience. Such a frame of mind unfits him for the consolations of religion. The trial lasts till it has wrought the purpose whereunto it was sent. Meanwhile the Christian, involved in darkness, sees not the gracious design. In the perplexity and distress of his thoughts, he "charges God foolishly." He is tempted to doubt his safety; and to say in his heart, "I shall one day perish."—He staggers at the promises through unbelief.—Now all his religion seems to be vain.—He seems as if he had been led into a flattering delusion; or as if God had forgotten to be gracious.—He is ready, in the bitterness of his soul, to say, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." This is a grievous temptation; and in such seasons, how needful is a supply of grace, to restrain intemperate complaints, and to subdue unbelief!

2ndly. The Christian ought to check every tendency in himself to hasty, intemperate, thoughts of his *Neigh-*

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bour. "A censorious temper of mind, which disposes a man to view, in the worst possible light, the conduct and motives of others, is universally disliked. It is an unamiable feature in any character, and altogether the reverse of the Christian spirit. Some, indeed, have unhappily connected an opinion of superior sagacity, with a habit of severe and condemnatory judging; and reckon the opposite disposition of always hoping the best, as a proof, at least, of greater simplicity than wisdom;—an opinion sufficiently ungenerous; and carrying in it a libel against mankind at large. But what is more to our present purpose, it is unscriptural. "Who, says the Apostle James," is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with *meekness* of wisdom: and then he adds, "The wisdom that cometh from above is *peaceable, gentle,* and *without partiality,*" or, as in the margin, "without *wrangling*;"—plainly indicating that harshness and censoriousness are not the characteristic of a *wise* man. Our Saviour also forbids the indulgence of such a temper.—"Judge not, that ye be not judged." The Christian is not, indeed, interdicted the exercise of his own judgment. The faculty of judging belongs to our nature, and both reason and religion require its exercise. Much of the Christian's safe and exemplary walk depends on his rightly judging the conduct of others. Without an enlightened use of this faculty, he would be the continual dupe of the crafty and ill-designing; and would be seen unwillingly ming-

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ling in religious communion with hypocrites and formalists, and men of this world, against whom he is specially cautioned. It is even a part of his duty to practice a discriminating judgment, without which he can neither take, nor give, warning. There are certain relations in which a Christian stands to society, and to his own immediate circle, that put him on the frequent use of his judging faculty;—as a Magistrate, to do judgment and justice;—as a Parent, to rule well his own house;—as a Pastor, to judge in the church, according to the rule of Christ. But in all such capacities, and on every occasion, the Christian is required to be *temperate*. If his own good principles operate, his thoughts will not seek, with cruel ingenuity, the points of aggravation. The Christian's proper spirit is delicate and kind. He loves to temper justice with mercy; and gives to every palliative circumstance its due weight and prominence.

But he needs the grace of Temperance, not only to guide his judgment, but to control his passions. He needs it to keep in check whatever train of thinking within him tends to foster haughtiness of spirit, or the odious and turbulent emotions of envy, anger or revenge. These are the features of the Evil One. The soul that is habitually distorted by them is in the most deplorable state. They pervert and disorder every faculty of the mind, so that nothing is viewed in its proper light; they vitiate the moral taste, and pollute

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every affection of the heart; so that no sweetness is felt in the cultivation of pious and virtuous emotions; nor any beauty seen in the exhibition of a benevolent and holy life. The Christian's character is formed on a model the reverse of all this. That model is the character of his Divine Master. He imbibes his spirit, and the foul demons that rioted in his breast before are expelled. He receives his light into the understanding, and he sees the deformity of sinful passions, and learns to hate them; and growing, under divine influence, in his knowledge and in his love of the Redeemer, he contracts his resemblance, in kind and benevolent sentiments, and in meekness and lowliness of heart, until he can say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty;—my soul is even as a weaned child." But the Christian's conformity to his perfect model is a gradual work. Much peculiar discipline is necessary to its accomplishment. He has not only to study his Saviour's portrait, and seek to make its features his own;—but he must carefully inspect himself, and watch and pray against every evil quality in his heart, that retards the attainment to which he aspires. He ought never to forget, that the *old* man, his natural depravity, is not put off at once. He has passions and appetites still that want to be subdued; and he succeeds not in putting on the *new* man, his conformity to Christ, till this is done. Knowing then his natural propensities, he will feel the importance of grace to counteract them. As often as they rise within him, he will take the alarm, as

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on the appearance of his worst enemies; he will have recourse to the energies of the Holy Spirit to extirpate them; and will not rest satisfied till he has "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

3rdly. The Christian needs the grace of Temperance to regulate and chasten his thoughts in reference to *Himself*. The special duties which the Christian religion enjoins on him who embraces it are mortification and self-denial. Such duties are necessarily imperative upon him from the circumstances of his own imperfect character, from the state of the world around him, and from that improvement of his whole nature which his religion is designed to effect. The Christian has much to do with his own heart. Many and various enemies lurk there; some more secretly than others. But let him examine and he will find, that none are more obstinately vivacious, or difficult of denial, than the passions which flatter himself. Pride, or self-consequence, that vice so hateful in the sight of God is one of these. It is a subtle foe. It steals even upon the Christian, under such a variety of disguises and fair pretensions, that it frequently betrays him into sin, ere he is aware of its approach. At one time, it insinuates itself under the form of a noble and enlightened feeling. The heart admits it, and swells with notions of self-importance. At another, it gains entrance under the

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semblance of a grateful sense of the gifts of heaven, and the Christian contemplates and admires his own attainments, till he forgets the source whence he derives them, and neglects the means of growing in them. Nay, even the opposite graces of humility and contrition are counterfeited by it. Pride will lurk under sack-cloth and ashes; and generate in the heart a feeling of self-complacency before God, as though the soul were thus enduring an atoning, if not a meritorious, penance. In short, the subtilty of this vice, and the ease with which it adapts itself to the weakness of man, render it peculiarly formidable. Much need has the Christian to set a daily watch against its encroachments, and to make his prayer unto God for grace to keep it in effectual check; and to temper every thought he indulges in reference to himself.

Another of those passions which flatter the soul of man to his own injury is Ambition,—a desire to rise above our fellows,—an eagerness to take the first place of influence and power. While under the tyranny of this passion, we are dissatisfied with our own condition, and for ever longing after eminence and distinction in society. It is a restless demon, and utterly inimical to harmony and peace. It fosters in the soul a host of sinful affections;—vanity and self-conceit, as it regards ourselves, with all the anti-social feelings, in regard to others; and even a spirit of rebellion, as it regards the arrangements of heaven. It is at once the scourge of

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him who is carried away by its impulse, and of them among whom he lives and acts his part. It disorders and afflicts society, by destroying its bonds. Love and friendship, kindness and generosity, with the many nameless reciprocities of tender and delicate minds, are all sacrificed to this ruling passion.—But what is this to the Christian? He is not of the world.—He has renounced its vanities.—The grace of God has taught him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.—He professes to be a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, and that he is seeking a better country than here.—He cannot, therefore enter on a career of ambition.—The thought of disputing it with the bustlers of this world, and struggling with the aspirants of temporal distinctions, can find no place in a mind like his. True, the Christian belongs not to such a field of contention as the world presents. But this passion, like other vices of the heart, is multiform and diffusive. It is found but too operative in every class, and in every condition of congregated life. The Christian among his fellow-Christians, is often subject to its impulse. He is betrayed by self-love, or it may be, he is led, in the first instance, by a notion of usefulness to the church, to make himself conspicuous. He then tastes the flattery of a foremost station; becomes tenacious of superiority; and allows to rankle in his breast those petty, but vexatious passions—the jealousy of rivalship—impatience of contradiction—and envy of another's success. That the Church of Christ is not exempt from this

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nuisance has been, alas! too often proved. At a very early period was it detected there, and that even among the disciples and personal attendants of our Lord himself. Small and poor as that sacred family was,—despised as it was by the great world, and excluded by the very nature of its own constitution from all participation in public concerns, ambition nevertheless crept into it. Of this two striking instances are recorded by the Evangelist, and the circumstances faithfully detailed for our instruction. On one of these occasions there arose a strife among the disciples generally "which of them should be the greatest;" on the other, two of them are named, who, under the influence of a culpable ambition, bespoke for themselves the most distinguished places about their Master's person. His kind but impressive rebukes, claim our serious regard. They convey to us, as they must have conveyed to them, his marked displeasure with this ambitious spirit.—"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be the last of all, and servant of all;" and setting a little child in the midst of the disciples, he said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Jesus Christ has taught us by his precept and by his example that the spirit which most becomes his followers is the opposite of ambition—the spirit of

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meekness and humility. How necessary, then, the grace of Temperance to restrain and subdue within us every the slightest rising of such an unlovely and anti-christian passion!

II. The second great department, or exhibition of human character, as we have already observed, is in the WORDS of the mouth. So long as the thoughts are locked up in a man's heart, they can be known only to God and himself. But out of the heart are the issues of life. What prevails within will flow into the life without. The thoughts are the fountains, the words and actions are the streams. As fountains, therefore, communicate to their streams the peculiar tinge and quality which characterize them, so the general quality of the thoughts in the heart of a man, give their prevailing character to the outward speech and doings of his life. The speech, indeed, may be so constructed as often to belie the heart, and conceal what is actually passing there. False colours also may be hung out in the conduct, so as to dupe those that confide in it. But this is constrained and occasional.—It will be found in general that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." From this view of the case, it is obvious, that the first concern of a man, for the whole of his character, is with his heart. His main object is, undoubtedly, to preserve order, peace, and purity, there. The heart is the citadel, and if that is in the possession of the Holy Spirit, the man is safe.

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The outposts may sometimes be forced by the enemy; but the Power that holds the heart will ultimately prevail. The importance, however, of rightly governing the tongue, considered as a moral instrument, is confessedly so great as to demand for itself the gravest attention. David thought so, when he prayed, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." The Apostle James thought so, when he wrote, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body;"—and what is of infinitely the greatest authority, our Lord himself teaches us to think so, when he declares, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." The Christian is, therefore, in daily need of grace, to guard him against the intemperate use of the tongue.

1st. Against every tendency to *foolish* talking. The tongue is an instrument necessarily of very frequent use. The social state requires it. Our intercourse with one another being constant, and the nature of that intercourse continually changing, must unavoidably call for a corresponding frequency and variety of speech. There is, however, much exercise of this faculty uncalled for, and consequently much vain, unedifying, foolish, talking. Men are too apt to consider their tongues as at their own disposal. Hence they employ them, with a kind of sovereign right, on whatever subject, and in whatever way, they please. Their habitual

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conversation too evidently disclaims any power of control, but that of their own will or humour; and proceeds on the same principle which David condemned in the ungodly of his time; "Our lips," said they, "are our own; who is Lord over us?" Such an exclamation would, no doubt, be reckoned highly presumptuous,—even impious. But we cannot account on any better principle, for the very free and thoughtless use which many people make of the tongue.

> "Sacred interpreter of human thought,
> How few respect, or use thee, as they ought!"

The Spirit of wisdom teaches the Christian that this too common license is a great evil. He is enjoined to avoid all "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient." He is instructed that however others may give loose to coarse and graceless language, the law of Christianity is express, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." These injunctions by no means interdict those occasional sallies of innocent humour and good tempered pleasantry, which enliven conversation without degrading it. They have frequently a kindly effect on the spirits of a party; and sometimes contribute not a little to the happiest moral purposes. The enlightened Christian is a man of serene mind. At peace with God and with himself, and looking with benignity on society around him, he may legitimately indulge,

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and is indeed often found indulging, a happy pleasantry of conversation peculiar to himself. This is so far from *foolish* talking, that it is just the instrument most commonly successful in putting it to silence.—"A word fitly spoken, O how good is it! it is like apples of gold in pictures of silver!" That from which the Christian is called on to refrain is conversation without a useful end in view.—And wisely is he so enjoined; for that verbal intercourse which is barren of good, tends to evil. It degrades and dissipates the mind, and renders subjects of serious import unacceptable. It consequently retards our progress in the spiritual life, destroys our usefulness in christian circles, and conforms us to the maxims and spirit of the world.

2ndly. The Christian needs the grace of Temperance, to restrain all *angry* and *irritating* language. He is exposed, it is true, in this world of offences, to many provocations. These may be great,—may be unreasonable,—may be greatly injurious,—they may be sudden, or they may come rapidly one upon another. It is hard for human nature, in all such cases, to receive them, to be sensible of them, and yet not resent them with wrathful ebullitions. But it is the glory of the Christian religion to achieve this. Philosophy, we own, has done much with some individuals to correct excessive anger; and moral suasion has succeeded, in some particular cases, to repress its violence. The rules however, of human wisdom have proved at best but

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palliatives of the evil. They have not gone to the seat of the disorder. When most favourably applied, it has been on the principle of making one passion neutralize another; or of sacrificing vices of inconvenient consequences to others more suitable to ambitious or vain-glorious motives. It is the religion of Christ only which supplies the remedy. By sending us to the aids of the Holy Spirit, it provides us with the power of subduing and destroying this evil propensity. The energy of that Spirit is not exerted on the tongue only. His influence consists not in merely curbing that difficult member; but his chief seat of operation is within. He eradicates the evil principle, and plants the good. He softens the affections; he sweetens the temper; and hence the Christian is enabled, in whatever case, "to put away from him all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice." It is Christian Temperance only, or that Temperance which is the fruit of Christ's Spirit, that effects this. He teaches us by his own example, "to recompense to no man evil for evil; when we are reviled, not to revile again; when we suffer, to threaten not, but to commit ourselves unto Him that judgeth righteously.

3rdly. The grace of Temperance is required, to restrain all tendency to expressions that savour of *profanity, irreligion,* or *want of due reverence* for the name and authority of God. We mean not here the grosser and more frightful varieties of this offence.

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These we can assign only to the most licentious and depraved of mankind, who glory in their shame, and make a mock of sin. But this disgrace of the human tongue has its degrees of atrocity and guilt. Into some of these men holding a good opinion in society are some times betrayed. The Christian will, at times, find himself in the company of the gay and frivolous. He may enter, perhaps unsuspectingly, into free conversation with them; and there may escape from his lips certain unguarded expressions hateful to him who would "stand in awe of God, and sin not." Such lapses are generally attended with unhappy consequences. The enemies of the Christian remember them to his disgrace,—to call his character into question, or to reproach his religion. The better feelings of some within his more immediate circle are shocked; while others, especially the young, suffer his example to weaken their sense of piety and Christian decorum. But when his conscience is commissioned to arise and smite him, he feels deeply the evil he has done,—he feels that he has degraded himself; that he has offended his God, and injured his sacred cause.—It is well when he goes out of such company and such temptations and "weeps bitterly." The Christian's Temperance is most likely to be assailed and overpowered by such temptations when he is most confident; and they serve to remind him of what his Master has told him, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and to send him with greater earnestness to pray, "Keep back thy servant also from

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presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

III. The third grand department of human character is CONDUCT, or what is properly called ACTIVE LIFE. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this department is made a very prominent subject of observation and instruction by the sacred writers. We are repeatedly referred by them to our *doings*, as to the test of our principles. And this is natural and just: for though God judges not by the overt and outward life, he yet teaches us, by the importance which he gives it, to regard it as the demonstration of hearts renewed by his grace. That divine truth which the soul receives of the Holy Spirit, while it enlightens the mind, sanctifies also the life. It is a transforming power operating on the believer, in the correction of his judgment, the purification of his affections, and the right direction of his will. Thus the inner man is renewed. The soul is cast, as it were, into a new mould, and comes forth into visible action, with the corresponding forms and impressions, more or less distinctly marked.—The tree is made good, and its fruit is also good. Hence our Lord sends us to the visible conduct of men, to ascertain the presence or absence of the truth within them—"Ye shall know them," says he, "by their fruits." The visible life of the Christian must agree with the hidden life of God, or the operations of His Spirit, in his heart and mind. It is by maintaining this

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agreement, he glorifies the author of his new nature. The family to which he belongs is recognized by the habitual conduct he observes. Born of the Spirit his habitual life is spiritual. Now, it is obvious from the nature of the case, that the Christian's spiritual life must consist much in mortifying the deeds of the body. His labour is twofold; he has to shun, as well as to pursue.—He has a conflict to sustain against an enemy, as well as an alliance to strengthen with a friend.—He has appetites and passions to subdue, and gifts and graces to nourish and improve:—In fine, while he has the promises of God's word to embrace, he has also the temptations of Satan and the world to resist. But successfully to resist the world, and mortify the deeds of the body, is an achievement of might above his own. It is the same grace that has made him what he is, which strengthens and prepares him for every time of need. He can make no effectual resistance to evil, he can give no sufficient proof of self denial, but only as the power of Christ rests upon him.

The temptations of the world place the Christian in danger. He is solicited on every side to relax his vigilance, and to taste some ensnaring pleasure. And this would he do; and one sinful compliance after another would he make, till he became the easy prey of the enemy that seeks to devour him, but for the grace of God.—If his footsteps slip not, it is because this grace holds up his goings. It is easy to perceive that tempta-

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tions arise out of every point of contact with the world in which the Christian is concerned. Against these he has need of special aid, that he may receive no detriment.

1st. There is the *business* of life, or the employment to which the Christian's application is necessary for himself and his house. He has to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Diligence in his lawful calling for such a purpose is his duty. It is commended in the word of God.—"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." It is positively enjoined. The Apostle, alluding to some who had neglected this duty, says, "We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." But there is danger of carrying this diligence to excess. Business may be plied with too intense an application of mental and physical powers. It then usurps the place of the "one thing needful." The man in this case suffers his mind to be racked with immoderate solicitude about his worldly pursuits. Not content with giving them only a proper share of his time and attention, nor duly trusting the kind providence of God, he engulphs himself in the perplexities and bustle of a fleeting existence. He distresses himself with those carping cares about to-morrow which our Lord forbids. Covetousness and earthly mindedness take possession of his heart. An honest

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competence satisfies him not. He *will* be rich, and to this favourite object not religion only, but peace and principle, health and honour, are all sacrificed.—And what further follows? He verifies the Apostolic conclusion, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Against any propensity to a sin of this ruinous description the Christian has need of Temperance. Nor will his reasoning faculties alone be sufficient in this case. Many strong arguments against the folly and danger of loving and serving the world to excess may, indeed, be easily brought,—and as easily silenced, too, by the dominant power of a sinful nature. The grace of God is essential to victory here. The Temperance which the Christian is required to exercise, is expressly styled a fruit of the Holy Spirit. When thus aided he resists temptation with success; for then his resistance has a special reference to God. He has respect to his authority, and shuns what He has forbidden; he is actuated by supreme love to God, and pursues a higher object; readily conforming to the Apostle's injunction, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have."

2ndly. There are the *amusements* of life, or *recreations*, to refresh nature from the fatigues of more serious business. Excess here is a very general transgression. The grace of Temperance is requisite, to limit such

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employments within the strict bounds of innocence and usefulness. That the health both of mind and body demands occasional relaxation, we deny not; nor does religion forbid it. It condemns such exercise as, under the name of amusements, fatigue and waste, rather than refresh, the powers of nature. It prohibits that expenditure of time or property, by which our well-doing in society is injured, and our own moral improvement retarded. It frowns on every gratification of improper desires; and will not allow that to be an innocent recreation which is hurtful to our neighbour, or wantonly cruel to any animal existence. The religion of the Christian is humane and benevolent, in all its aspects. It permits him his recreations; but forbids him to learn them of the world. The fashionable practice and loose morality of such a school are fatal to Christian piety. This holy religion purifies the taste; and then we find our amusements in exercises which, while they unbend, improve the mind, and in employments which gratify the sympathetic and benevolent affections. But in a world where the amusements are so many exhibitions of coarseness, frivolity, or dissipation, the Christian is in danger of being borne away by the strong current of example, into some excess. He is in danger of forgetting the real worth and importance of his days and hours to his immortal interests, and sacrificing them to this world's supremacy. Restraining grace is needful to preserve him here. The wisdom that cometh from above can alone teach him to discrimi-

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nate between the mirth which ends in heaviness, and the enjoyments of an approving conscience, and show him how to relax without folly, and to be merry without sin.

3rdly. There is the *indulgence of the appetites* and *senses*. Our natural appetites are part of our constitution, and intended for wise and good purposes. It is against their abuse that both reason and religion lift their voice. But this abuse prevails among large portions of our fallen race. Their appetites are their masters; for it is in the nature of these impulses of the flesh to control, where they are not controlled, and from every successive indulgence, to run the soul into deeper and deeper guilt. The ravages which these headstrong tyrants have committed in the moral world are fearfully great. Wherever they have been allowed to reign, they have darkened and perverted the reason of man. They have polluted his affections and desires. They have destroyed his sense of justice, honour and truth; and have debased him below the level of the the brutes that perish. These are their melancholy, but genuine, effects. The indulgence of imperious appetites and passions must ever prove the fruitful source of crime, disease, and wretchedness. Their unhappy victims however, are too often successful in carrying it fair before the world. They may, or may not, profess a veneration for religion, we shall find them, at least, taking much pains to belie the testimony of their own

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hearts, and to persuade us, that they are in the full enjoyment of life. It is in secret they suffer the lashes of an avenging conscience, and writhe under the just recompense of their deeds. To come out before society they assume the air of satisfaction and cheerfulness They borrow for the occasion, the smiles of hearts a ease, and dress their manners to the customs and decorums of orderly and virtuous characters. In thus masking their true condition, and paying homage to better principles before the world, they have a double object in view. They seek to conceal their own misery and to entrap others. Without a disguise they could not hold their places in society; and to make society a refuge from the gnawings of inward remorse, they labour to form it into fellowship with themselves. In this they resemble their father, the Devil. Like him they lie in wait to deceive. In his spirit, they go about seeking whom they may devour. They practise on the inexperienced and unwary, by the false names with which they soften down, or gild their vices. They represent them under the imposing description of virtues, belonging to the high minded and well-bred classes of men, or at least as amiable weaknesses. Their impure excesses, which the scriptures stigmatize, as "the filthiness of the flesh," they hold to be a becoming gallantry, and the expression of warm and generous hearts. Their habits of dissipation and intemperance, they call the characteristics of free, independent, social, spirits. The objections of them that would live soberly

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and orderly in the world, are scouted as the maxims of pusillanimity and narrowness of mind; and the warning of God's word against "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries," they affect to scorn as the austere lectures of gloomy ascetics; or to repel, as the self-denying doctrines of unattainable perfection. These advocates for human depravity are found, alas! in formidable numbers, and of every class. They are not without activity and address; and when they prostitute, as some really do, the talents of eloquence and poetry to such unhallowed purposes, they are often too successful. Their "lips seem to drop as a honey-comb, and their mouth is smoother than oil." The susceptible and unsuspicious hearts of the young are wrought on, as by a spell; and while the enchantment lasts, they are willingly conducted to the bowers of Pleasure;—"and they know not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." The natural tendency of the human heart is to self-indulgence. Christians, therefore, of whatever standing in life, but especially those of the earlier stages, are to be cautioned against this species of intemperance. The venerable Apostle addressing his son Timothy, acknowledges in the kindest manner, his confidence in his faith and piety; but with equal faithfulness, admonishes him against the pollutions of the world. "Let every one," says he, "that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity,—Flee also youthful lusts." Our Lord himself

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establishes by his own example, the propriety of such admonitions, as addressed to Christians. Speaking to his professed disciples of the destruction awaiting the temple and city of Jerusalem, he presses upon them the strictest watchfulness against intemperance: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares,—and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." No Christian, then, is warranted to set himself above cautionary instruction; or to deem as an insult to his moral principles, the warnings of his spiritual friends against "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

The more decidedly, indeed, the man declares for Christ and the cause of the Gospel, the more fixedly should the law of that Gospel be held in his view; and the more deeply should it be impressed on his mind, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." The constitution of things under which he is placed engages the Christian to a temperate and holy life. His religion is a system of holiness. All its appointments are emblems of inward and practical purity; all its prohibitions, and all its injunctions; all its threatenings, and all its promises, have in view the renewal of his entire nature, and his restoration to God, by a holy conformity to his image. He is, there-

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fore, bound to a holy avoidance of every thing sinful in thought, word, or deed. He is required to be "temperate in *all* things;" and that under the most important considerations.

The *glory of God* requires it. God is glorified in his people, not by their profession, but by the exemplification of their graces. This must be their continual aim. "Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do all to the glory of God." For this were they created anew; "This people have I formed for myself, *they shall show forth my praise.*" As the adopted children of God, they are required to prove their relationship, by their resemblance to Him. They are "to purify themselves, even as He is pure." Their every emotion, and their every thought, must be tempered and conformed to His holy law. They are said figuratively to be the temple of God, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them; whatever therefore their hearts contain,—all their internal furniture, must be kept clean and in order for the heavenly Resident,—"the temple of God is holy." But if they glorify God in the secrecy of the heart, and in the correction and tempering of first principles, they will not fail to do it in their visible life. The fruits of inward rectitude will appear in the conversation and conduct; and they will appeal to the world, in the language of Paul and his brethren, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and

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godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

Society requires of Christians the exercise of Temperance. The general tenour of a Christian life is such, as, at once, protests against the dissipations of the world, and exhibits a pattern of the opposite virtues. The disciple of Christ is governed by a purer code of laws than that of the mere worldling. But to make them tell to a good account, he must embody them in his life. By his own constant and cheerful obedience he holds up to many, a reproving contrast, and to all, an inviting example. In both cases, he is in the best position to benefit, with the blessing of God, the circle in which he moves. It is not unfrequently found, that those who will kick against oral reproof, are powerfully moved by the demonstrations of a happy example. A rebuke in direct language, however cautiously expressed, has often been met with a proud resistance, which, when presented in a practical form by a consistent Christian, has been instantly felt, and well appreciated. As the light of the world, Christians have to shine for its benefit.. They have to reflect on the dark places around them, that light which they derive from above; and so discover to erring men the dangers of their own ways, and point them to that straight and upward path that leads to God.—And this, they are taught, is effected, not so much by their doctrine and precept, as by the visible purity of their lives, which adorn that

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doctrine;—by the practical Temperance, which, in their own strong language, is "the mortification of their members which are upon earth, and the crucifixion of the world to them, and of themselves to the world."

Finally, the Temperance of the Christian is needful to *his own spiritual interests*. A failure in Temperance is a breach made for the entrance of the enemy to the heart. He delays not to press his advantage; he brings up as many, and as powerful temptations as the case will admit; and makes them bear, with all the mischief he may, on the imagination, the passions, and the will, of the backsliding Christian. Hence the sin of intemperance, in any mode of it, is seldom a single offence. Innumerable evils are often the consequence of one unguarded indulgence. How often does an intemperate thought issue in some unadvised expression of the lips, or some sad irregularity in practice, causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme! And when the Christian has suffered himself to associate too freely with them who forget God, how surely does he prove the truth of Paul's maxim, "Evil communications corrupt good manners!" By every act of intemperance the Christian fails not to wound his own peace, to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to shake his confidence in the love and faithfulness of his God. His prospects are consequently obscured.—He is estranged from his privileges, as though he dared not enjoy them; and his progress in the spiritual life is thus greatly re-

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tarded. When his better principles begin to react, he is made to feel the error of his ways, he looks back upon them with sorrow and contrition. He thinks of a holy God whom he has offended, and exclaims with the Psalmist, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." He thinks of his Saviour, whose name he has dishonoured, and feels, as if he heard his rebuke, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" He thinks of the sacred cause which he has wounded,—of the church which he has made ashamed, and of his own vows which he has broken; and "trouble and anguish take hold on him." Each of these considerations gall him, as an arrow sent from the hand of God, and his recollection of every aggravating circumstance attending his sin, furnishes the poison which "drinketh up his spirit." If such, then, are the painful consequences to a believer of a lapse into sin, how desirable is the grace which holds him up!—how needful every caution against high-mindedness and self security!—how wise the admonition of our Lord, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation!" and, in reference to an enticing and polluting world, what grace, what tenderness for the Christian's welfare, breathes in that divine exhortation, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty!"

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CHAPTER VIII.

PATIENCE.

THE infinitely high importance of things spiritual, above things natural,—of that which is eternal, above that which is temporal,—of the soul of man above his body, is a principle constantly and prominently recognized throughout the word of God. There he shows us, that, upon this principle, all his own works, and all his moral legislation, are constructed; and there he teaches us, that it is essential to our happiness and glory, that we also fully recognize and act upon it. The truth of this order of supremacy and subordination is founded in the very nature of things. All visible and tangible objects are essentially fluctuating, frail, and perishable. The things that are not seen, which are the subjects of revelation and the objects of faith, are truly incorruptible, undefiled, and that cannot fade away; suited, moreover, to the entire purity, dignity and happiness of our nature. This order, established by heaven, and taught by the Oracles of truth, we do, nevertheless, practically invert. We put that first which should be last, and that last which should be first. Sin has produced that anarchy within us, by which the lawful Sovereign is dethroned, by which the inferior nature is

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set up, and all its carnal and worldly desires, all its vain and grovelling pursuits, all its vile and headstrong appetites and passions, like so many favorites, are put in command. The interests of the soul, by far the nobler part, are neglected, despised, destroyed. The meaner ones of sense, the tainted pleasures of a fleeting life, the visionary honours of a shifting and dying world, pollute and captivate the heart, and subjugate the powers of the mind. This strange misrule is natural to apostate man.—Hence, though it be continually working his own degradation and misery, he obeys it, and delights in it, till a Power *out* of himself, and *above* himself, counteract his evil bias, and restore the true and happy order of things within him. This Power is provided and revealed in Christianity, and the effectual working of this power emancipates the subject on whom it is exerted, from the thraldom of a disloyal and sinful nature. The mind is taught to resume its place of dignity and superiority over brute matter. Earth, and earthly things, the world, and secular concerns, are subordinated to the kingdom of God and his righteousness, which now become the primary objects of pursuit. But this transformation is not instantaneous. Being nothing less than the restoration of a revolted soul to her proper allegiance,—the recovery of an alienated mind to congeniality with God, a varied discipline is required, and the process must be gradual. If then we duly consider the nature of the change to be consummated, with the actual character of

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the subject on whom it passes, and the various circumstances of the world to which he is exposed, we shall readily admit that the training must, in general, be arduous; and, that only by a persevering pursuit of one attainment after another, does the Christian advance to the end in view. It is a pressing towards the mark: it is an habitual endeavour to maintain a practical demonstration of the scriptural principle of which we speak, the preference of spiritual realities to the things of time and sense. It is a continual resistance of the proud pretensions of the lower nature, and a supreme regard to the interests of the soul and eternity, against whatever opposes them, in self or the world. It was under the influence of this principle that Moses "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect unto the recompense of reward." In the same spirit, the Apostle declared, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Now that fruit of the Spirit which at once indicates and feeds this gracious principle in the Christian is, PATIENCE. The spirituality of his mind is both proved and strengthened by the exercise of that grace. It is a grace which may be considered the result of a vigour in the soul communicated by divine energy alone. It is divine illumination only which has impressed upon the Christian the pre-eminence of heavenly things;

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and in proportion as he strongly realizes that pre-eminence, he endures with Patience the whole will of God, "that he may receive the promise." It is divine correction that has convinced him of the utter worthlessness of all sublunary things for his ultimate happiness; and "he takes *patiently*, even *joyfully*, the spoiling of his goods, knowing in himself that he has in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

It is therefore obvious, that in exhorting to Patience, the Apostle urges the follower of Christ to an important expression of the Christian life. The exhortation is the more needful, as it is an exercise to which he is frequently called. The world is an enemy to his faith, and is ever presenting its various forms of dislike and persecution, many of which are not to be wearied out and conquered, but by *patient* endurance. By the steady exercise of this grace, the Christian often subdues an enemy whom resistance would only have stung to greater rage and cruelty. The conquests of Patience, too, are always the most decisive, as well as the most lovely and pleasing. On any occasion, it may be truly said, that the greatest man upon earth no sooner subjects a patient, unmurmuring Christian, to persecution, than he just brings into impressive contrast, before the world, a vastly greater and more dignified person than himself.—Yes, greater, immeasurably greater, is he, who, in the face of all possible varieties of suffering and death, can say, "None of these things move me," than he who arrays them all against him.

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We will now briefly state the Nature of Christian patience, and then proceed to notice some occasions which call for its Exercise.

I. PATIENCE, as a Christian grace, may be defined, in the general, a steady, unbroken endurance of successive evils; or, a submissive waiting for some future good. The term used by the Apostle, when he bids us add to our Temperance, Patience, denotes a fixed and tranquil abiding of the soul under afflictions. It is that frame of mind by which a man, sustained by godly considerations, passes unreluctantly, and unrepiningly, through all the allotted labours and sufferings of his life. It is not a deficiency of feeling.—The Christian is alive to afflictions, and counts them "not joyous, but grievous." It is not the effect of philosophical discussion on the unalterable laws of the universe;—these may silence complaints, but cannot support the mind. Neither is it the calm of mere subjection to an uncontrollable power; far less the silence of a pride that will not bend.—No, in Christian Patience are blended faith, hope, and filial resignation. In the severest afflictions he will say, "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Christian Patience is a grace of peculiar excellence and utility, in a world and a state of existence like the present. It is the lot of humanity to suffer. "Man that is born of a woman

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is of few days and full of trouble." No order of men no rank in society, no employment or profession of life, can claim exemption from it. If such, then, is our present condition, and suffering is unavoidable, how desirable is a specific against despair,—a remedy against a broken spirit! And for this, forthwith steps Worldly-Wisdom, and offers its soothing flatteries, its baseless reasonings, its delusive representations. All these, it is unnecessary to say, fail of their object, and often aggravate the load they profess to lighten. But the remedy for human wretchedness, which has escaped alike the researches of ancient and modern sages, is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the glory of the Gospel, that it is so admirably suited to a suffering race. It brings us the only stay of the mind, under whatever calamity; opening up a vista of light through the darkest scene, and discovering to us the God of grace, on the throne of providence, making all things work together for good to them that love him. It presents the Christian with no representation of his case that shall deceive him; it puts under him no prop that shall break or give way. It is a treasury of every needful aid, and open to the Christian's faith. The Holy Spirit, who brings him to this treasury, applies its everlasting truths and precious promises, as so many strong consolations, to his soul, through which he is enabled to take high ground, in his severest warfare. The Christian sees God, in all his concerns;—he trusts God, in all his

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perils,—he flees to God in all his necessities; and hence it is, that "in Patience he possesses his soul."

We think it is no libel on the science of the human mind, to say that there are cases where the strongest reasonings it can suggest, and the noblest resolves it is able to inspire, will prove utterly unavailing to a wounded spirit. They are shelters that will not stand in the evil day,—moorings from which the unwary soul is often driven by the storm. It is only the Christian's hope, the hope of the Gospel, that may be justly called, "the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast." From this hold no power can drive him. When he feels his fastening here, he can sing with the Church, "God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." He sees others beating about in the ocean of life. They have rejected *his* Pilot, and they trust to a chart of their own construction. In the day of prosperity, they pass gaily along, and boast, perhaps, of their equanimity and peace. But tempests arise for which they are not provided. In vain they struggle in their own strength; in vain exert their own skill.—The storms prevail, and they are swallowed up in the billows, or dashed in pieces on rocks and shallows, which they know not how to shun.—"The tinkled

is driven away in his wickedness;—the hope of the hypocrite shall perish." But the Christian's confidence is not in himself. He has placed it in a Pilot whose skill is infallible, and whose faithfulness is inviolable. He is, therefore, at peace. He sees an object which the world does not see.—He sees the face of a reconciled God, and his conscience is at rest. He hears a voice which the world does not hear; and it says to him, "Fear not for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." On this God he stays his mind, and Patience has her perfect work. Hence he is composed and satisfied, under circumstances that alarm and agitate others. For where are the resources of others to produce Patience? Alas! the delusions of the self-righteous are as chaff before the wind. A searching visitation from God exposes his nakedness and poverty, and he is confounded before him. The abundance of the worldling is a broken reed, which pierces him through with many sorrows. The insensibility and thoughtlessness of the profligate are the sportings of a madman on the brink of destruction. Neither of these positions can the soul take up for security. So far from affording encouragement to tranquillity and Patience, they are just grounds of trouble and alarm. They are *forbidden* positions, and therefore dangerous. It is not in pharasaical confidence, nor in worldly possessions, nor in fearless profanity, that the soul can find a covert from the storm, or a refuge from the avenger. No, whatever they *seem* to be, they are, in truth, the most powerful attractors of the lightning of

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heaven, and bring swift destruction on their victims. But the Christian has a foundation for his Patience in the day of trouble that can never fail him. He has lodged his confidence where it can never be betrayed, and for this he has a scriptural warrant. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

We deny not, indeed that the Christian's equanimity is sometimes disturbed, and that his Patience is not, at all times, equally sustained. A strong temptation will sometimes weaken his faith; then doubt and timidity beset him. But the love of God in Christ Jesus is never taken from him. "The God of all comfort, who comforteth him in all his tribulations," suffers him not to become the prey of his enemy. The Holy Spirit sends him to his supplications, and "makes intercession for him, with groanings that cannot be uttered." The displays of divine love are renewed; fresh supplies of grace are communicated to him; and as his sorrows abound, his consolations much more abound. Thus his "tribulations work Patience, and Patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh him not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him," Now, that calm endurance of protracted afflictions, rising from such sources as these, constitutes Christian Patience. It is in the nature and province of this grace to preserve the mind in peace, whether

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under severe privations, or hopes long deferred—"Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." It silences and suppresses murmurs, and every rash and fretful feeling. It elevates the soul above the clouds of present distress, and forms her to that holy heroism by which she scarcely heeds the light and momentary afflictions now endured, for the enlarged and vivid prospect she obtains of the glory to be revealed. And it disposes the Christian, from the best possible considerations, to a steady, persevering course of well doing, in the face of every opposition, over every discouragement, and at whatever cost it may demand. In the exercise of this grace he passes happily through a wilderness of briers and thorns, "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," and adorned with the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

II Some of those occasions which demand the exercise of Christian Patience may now be remarked. The Apostle addressing the Hebrew Christians, says, "Ye have need of Patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;"—intimating that Patience must be in habitual exercise; that it must always distinguish the Christian, and that the promise is for them that persevere. The trials of the primitive Christians, we know, were great, and some of them peculiar. But Patience is not a grace for the primitive ages, or for cases of severe persecution

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only, it is needful to Christians of every age, and of every condition. As none of God's children are without chastisement, so none of them can subsist without the passive graces. The life of every Christian is a life of faith, and necessarily places the mind in an expectant position. He is yet on his journey; and through difficulties, and dangers and various tribulations, must he pass to reach his home. He is yet in the field,—the battle is yet to be fought; and he has to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He is yet on the course, striving for the prize; and he is required to "run with Patience the race that is set before him." Now, in himself he has no resources for conditions like these. They involve such trials of strength as exceed the powers of human nature;—such calls for hope against hope,—for courage in the face of danger,—for trust under disappointment,—for long suffering and Patience, under delays of God's promise, and the oppression of man, that without continued supplies of grace from heaven, the Christian would not hold on his way, nor ultimately obtain the the prize. But these supplies are guaranteed. The God whom he serves has given him "exceeding great and precious promises," which provide freely and abundantly for his every time of need. In them he reads, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be. Ask and it shall be given thee; seek and thou shalt find; knock and it shall be opened unto thee;" and "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

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The grace of Patience is essential to the support of the Christian character, in the *various occurrences of life.* The follower of Christ is not taught to look for exemption from the common lot of humanity. He is exposed, like others, to laborious and painful pursuits, to disappointed hopes, to afflictive bereavements, to the irritable tempers and sinful passions of men, with the many nameless springs of sorrow to which our nature is liable. In this respect "all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." The difference is in the resources possessed by the one and the other, for rightly meeting and sustaining the vicissitudes of their condition. The men of the world, at once ignorant of, and disdaining to seek, other aid, venture every thing on their own fancied stores of power and wisdom. Nothing can be more fallacious. The history of our race and our daily experience tell us, that of all things man is the most faithless to himself. He arrogates a strength which belongs not to him.

> "Weak and irresolute is man!
> The purpose of to day
> Woven with pains into his plan,
> To-morrow rends away!"

The limits by which the mere worldling has bounded his desires and pursuits are those of time and sense. Beyond these limits he knows no desirable object. His hopes and fears, his whole happiness, and oft his very

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existence, hang on the possessions, the honours, the pleasures, of a world proverbially uncertain and delusive. When, therefore, these elude and forsake him, his all is gone. When his false foundations of happiness give way, he has no hold above, and sink he must. Whatever he thought of his resources in prosperity, adversity finds him unprepared. Man, at the best estate to which he can bring himself, is altogether vanity. Every cross event is a storm which either blows him about like chaff before the wind, or stirs him into wrathful impatience, as the breath of the tempest tosses the billows into noise and foam. There is nothing, then, in the moral state of the worldling on which to bottom Patience. His mind has no principle of acquiescence. He is a prey to the sickness of hope deferred, to the sullenness, or desperation, of disappointment, and to the disgust of transitory and unsatisfactory possessions.

It is not so with the Christian. He is placed in a different constitution of things. Taught habitually to prefer the kingdom of God and his righteousness to all other things, he is less dependent for his peace, on any modification of his outward state. This preference being a principle of his mind, he is not, and cannot be, the sport of passing events. The loss, or destruction, of his earthly substance does not beggar and ruin him, as it does the worldling. He can say, "I have an inheritance not of this world; an inheritance incorruptible,

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undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for me." If deceived by friends, and forsaken by those in whose fidelity he trusted, he can say, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord of hosts is with me, the God of Jacob is my refuge." If his closest friends and dearest relatives upon earth are severed from him, by the hand of death; and the desire of his eyes is taken away with a stroke, he is enabled to say, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And if his own mortal frame give indications of approaching dissolution, his language is, "This earthly house of my tabernacle is dissolving; but I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." —"I am going from darkness and confinement to immense light and perfect liberty; from these tempestuous regions, to the soft and peaceful climes above; from pain and grief, to everlasting ease and tranquillity. Hold out, Faith and Patience! It is but a little while, and your work will be at an end—but a few moments, and these sighs and groans will be converted into everlasting happiness—but a few weary steps, and the journey of life will be finished."* Hence the patient endurance of the Believer under circum-

* Rowe.

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stances that appal and destroy the fearless and stout-hearted of the world.

For the Christian, who reckons on no resources of his own, every needful aid is promised in the covenant of grace; and this he can plead, in the name of Christ, on every occasion. Such a privilege is essential to his success; for he has a character to sustain against discouragements ever recurring. The Apostle expresses that character by "a patient continuance in well-doing." A constant supply of divine grace is needful for this. It is not from the untowardness of external things alone that the Christian is tempted to impatience of spirit;—the sin that yet dwells in him, and the weakness of the flesh frequently war against the better law of his mind. The constant vigilance he has to maintain, and the ever-returning duties he has to perform, often prove a weariness to the flesh, and he finds that when he would do good, evil is present with him. Hence many painful struggles, to which without the grace of Patience, he would be found unequal. Now, as this struggle is, more or less, constant, it follows that he must constantly realize his dependence on the Spirit of all grace. He must be an habitual suitor at the court of heaven. It is promised that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." But the aid necessary to ensure this is to be had from God. "Pray without ceasing," is, therefore, no extravagant admonition. It is thus, that divine

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strength is made perfect in human weakness. It is communion with God in prayer, which, like provision thrown secretly into a besieged town, strengthens the soul, and enables it to hold out, and triumph over all attacks made from without,—"The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps his heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

But there are other *cases relative entirely to the Christian character*, which render the grace of Patience peculiarly needful. The Christian, in his present state, is living in an uncongenial generation. The principles and practice of men around him are in direct opposition to his, and to what they ought to be. The truth of this he may be said continually to witness. Without going into the haunts of folly, or visiting the hot-beds of depravity and vice, his ears are frequently wounded with the great swelling words of vanity, the profane expressions, the filthy conversation, of the wicked: and his eyes pained with the sight of their unlawful and unholy practice. As in the case of righteous Lot, "his soul is vexed from day to day." This is a trial of no small magnitude. David felt it deeply, when he exclaimed, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." And our Lord himself bears testimony to the pain and grief which such a trial occasions,—"O faithless generation," said he to the Jews, "how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you!" Now, to witness the follies and

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vices of the world, to sigh and to cry for all the abominations that are done in it, and yet to bear with the offenders themselves, without offending, what need of Christian Patience! How difficult, on such occasions, to subdue a feeling of vengeance, especially when it seems so nearly allied to a holy anger! How strong the temptation to violate the spirit of the Poet's prayer,

> "If anger boil, let anger be my praise,
> And *sin* the graceful indignation raise!"

The great aptitude of good men to a sinful impatience here, was strikingly manifested, on one occasion, by two of Christ's disciples. When their divine Master was on his way to Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of a Samaritan village had refused him their accommodation, the disciples, James and John, resenting it, said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not, what manner of spirit ye are of." Thus spoke the Patience of forgiveness, and a lovely spirit it is! God's own Spirit is the author of it, and his agency on the heart is beautifully illustrated by the Christian in whose conduct it is exemplified.

Again, the follower of Christ feels this grace highly needful, *under disappointments arising from the inconsistencies, and falling away, of professing Christians.*

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That such events cannot fail deeply to pain the spiritually-minded Christian, it is needless to say. They are usually attended with effects, in all of which he takes no common interest. Nothing, indeed, belonging to the kingdom of Christ can be foreign to him; but the character and conduct of its members are objects of his anxious regards. The benevolent principles of his religion open his heart kindly to all the species; but to the household of God, in particular, he is allied by the most delicately sensible ties. "Christians, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Whether therefore one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." In such a community of interests and feeling, it is impossible that one Christian, or one professor of Christian godliness, can greatly transgress, without proportionably grieving and trying all the others who are cognizant of it. Yes, the inconsistent walk of one professing faith in Christ is a sight for a Christian brother to weep at. He weeps to see the sacred cause of the Redeemer wounded, the mouths of enemies opened to speak reproachfully, and the spiritual interests of the offending individual himself endangered by his retrograde conduct. In such a case, what need of Patience and forbearance! On the one hand, to be sensible of the evil committed, to see its consequences in part, and to be capable of tracing it through all its probable mischiefs; and on the other, to pity, rather than upbraid; and to intercede,

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rather than resent—to obey the Apostolic injunction, in "withdrawing from a brother that walketh disorderly, to note such a man, and have no company with him;" and yet, to "count him not as an enemy; but admonish him as a brother!"—for all this, the Christian must needs imbibe a large portion of his Master's spirit, who exhibited the grace of Patience, in all its wisdom and beauty.

There are those, too, who begin well, who gain the Christian's confidence, and afterwards make shipwreck of their faith; who, after entering themselves of the train of Christ, are by and by offended, go back, and walk no more with him. This is no small trial to a faithful and simple-hearted disciple. Nothing is more irritating than deception; and in a case of religious treachery, it is hard for the Christian to withhold from it the angry and vituperative language it seems to deserve. But he is commanded to "be patient toward all men." He had need, therefore, to be ever watchful, and ever-prayerful, that "in Patience he may possess his soul."

Another case, in which the Christian has special need of Patience, is that of *persecution for righteousness sake.* This is, more or less, the lot of all Christians; and they are forewarned of it with a frankness and distinctness, which leaves them no ground to complain, that it takes them by surprise. It is notwithstanding a grievous visitation. The Apostle himself acknowledges

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it to be so. "No chastening," says he, (and he alludes to that of persecution), no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." He adds, however, a consideration sufficient to satisfy us, that if persecution, or chastening of any kind, be inevitable, it is also profitable,—"nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby. "This fruit of righteousness is in nothing more evident, under persecution, than in the Patience with which it is endured. Much need, then, has the Christian to cultivate a patient temper, to meet the multifarious provocations of a persecuting world. If he would glorify God, when persecuted, he must take it patiently. "If, when ye do well," says our Apostle, "and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." It is by this patient endurance of the world's injustice and cruelty that the Christian proves the supremacy of his love to his Redeemer, for whose sake he suffers the loss of all things. In the exercise of this grace under persecution, he most powerfully illustrates his conformity to his divine Master, in loving even his enemies, blessing them that curse him, and praying for them that despitefully use him. Such examples, also, it is well known, have greatly contributed to the good of the Church. A patient sufferer for conscience' sake is an interesting spectacle. It speaks to the heart. It draws forth sympathy; and following thereon have we often seen inquiry, conviction, and a final adoption of the persecuted cause. How desirable,

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how needful, under this view of it, is Christian Patience! And how important is it to every disciple of Christ, to receive, with devout attention, every admonition to the cultivation of a grace so essential to the support of his own soul and the glory of God!

It becomes us to notice yet another consideration which renders the grace of Patience particularly needful to the Christian. He is yet an expectant. Here he has no abiding place. He makes not, nor wishes to make, the present world his ultimate rest. He is even constrained, at times, to cry with David, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar;" or, like the Apostle, to own that "he has a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." When by a vigorous act of faith, his mind dwells on the happiness and glory of the future state;—when he thinks of a perfect liberation from all sorrow and sin, from all pain and sickness, and from death itself;—when his heart swells with the anticipation of perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, rivers of pleasure, trees of life, the company of blessed spirits, the vision of God, a city of habitation, and a crown of glory; and then compares it with his present state of sin and suffering, of temptation and warfare, of doubts and fears, he groans under his earthly house, and longs to "be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Now, the more lively his faith, and the

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more delightful his meditations on the heavenly state, the more intense will be his desire of possession. This feeling is apt to run into impatience. He would have the way through which he is passing smoother, or shorter. He exclaims, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest!" But this must be checked. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." It becomes him, indeed, to rejoice in the prospect of his inheritance; but he is yet an heir, and must submit to "tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father." While he contemplates the fulfilment of the promise with growing confidence and delight, he must remember that it says, "Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." Under the sharpest trial of his faith, the Christian's proper frame is that of *Acquiescence*. Job's language will be always seasonable, "All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my change come." For this the grace of Patience must be sought. His own emotions are not to be trusted. Without the guidance of the Holy spirit, they will carry him into forbidden regions. Whatever his knowledge, or his experience, "it is not for him to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." The Apostle, therefore, sympathizing with believers under this bearing of the mind, at once instructs and comforts them when he says, "The trying of your faith worketh Patience; but let Patience have her per-

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fect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

We would now exhort every one that names the name of Christ to a careful, unremitting, exercise of this grace. It is, like other graces of the Christian character, a fruit of the Spirit; but, as the health and maturity of nature's productions require care and culture, so, if the Christian would have the fruits of the Spirit flourish in his character he must diligently ply the means of their cultivation. He is repeatedly called to do so, in the sacred Scriptures. Nor can it be inculcated beyond its importance. Much depends on its prominence for the strength and beauty of the Christian character. It is at once an ornament and a defence. Fretfulness and impatience of spirit are the passions of a child. It is only in the believer's weakness that they can gain upou him. In his better moments, he laments them, as indications of little faith, and is ashamed of them, as deformities disgusting to the eye of God and of the world. Without Patience adversity is without its blessing; the heart, without its consolation, and religion, without its honour. Let the Christian, then, as he values his own spiritual growth, his own peace and happiness, and the glory of his God, cultivate in himself this fruit of the Holy Spirit.

To the maturity of this grace an habitual spirituality of mind is essential;—that spirituality of mind which indi-

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cates a decided preference of heavenly and eternal things to things earthly and temporal—a deep feeling of the superior claims of the soul, and its interests over those of the body, and all corruptible things; and a ruling desire to hold communion with God, in the exercises of faith, devotion, and obedience. Upon this happy state of the mind Patience rises and rests. When adversity comes, the Christian, whose mind is thus happily constituted, meets it with the smile of Patience, as a well-intended messenger from his heavenly Father. The rain may descend, the floods may come, and the winds may blow, and beat upon the hope and confidence of his soul, and they fall not, for they are built upon a rock. O! the conscious satisfaction, the pleasing assurance, the calm heroism, of the soul that feels a happy interest in the work of her divine Redeemer! To her the love of a never-changing God, and the eternal world, and the glorious and happy beings that dwell there, are all that are momentous. All sublunary things derive whatever importance they possess from their relation to these supreme objects. A Christian of this description cannot be taken by surprise. He is prepared for every event. He is armed at every point; therefore, in Patience shall he possess his soul, and he "shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end!"

As a stimulus to the exercise of Patience, we would suggest the example of the godly in all ages of the

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world. "Take, my brethren," says the Apostle, "the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of Patience." The memoirs of eminent Christians are recorded in the Scriptures of truth for our instruction; and we may say in general, that we cannot observe their noble bearing, through the trying scenes of their eventful lives, without catching the glow of *their* holy ardour, and feeling, as though steeled with *their* patient endurance. This principle of our nature the sacred writers seem fully aware of. They avail themselves of it in frequent appeals, for the purposes of a consistent and godly life. "We desire," says the Apostle to the Hebrews, "that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and Patience inherit the promises."—"Ye have heard of the Patience of Job," says another, "and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Let the Christian under affliction study the lives of the wise and good. In them he has precept and principle embodied, truth illustrated, and the very graces of the soul made visible in actual life. He learns in abstract admonitions the duties that belong to his character; but the examples of those who have gone before him, show him at once their practicability and beauty. When men of like passions, and in similar situations with himself, are made, as it were, to pass before him through the vicissitudes of their respective lives, in which they are seen subduing their passions, resisting temptations, rejoicing in hope,

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and patient in tribulation,—it is a sight to put sloth to shame, to excite to zeal, and, with the blessing of God, to inspire with the same spirit of holy and happy endurance.

But of all examples, that of his divine Master is the most proper for the Christian's study. The example of the wisest and best of God's people can be recommended only with limitations. We are to be followers of Paul, only so far as he followed Christ. The example of Christ is perfect. It claims the unreserved imitation of all his disciples. We are expressly told, that "he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps." To this the Saviour himself invites his disciples. "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." To this we are commanded in the most solemn manner. "We are to be holy, as he is holy, and to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus." It is the grand design of God, in the dispensations of his grace, "to conform us to the image of his Son." Let the Christian, then, make Christ his pattern, and the grace of Patience will not fail him. While he is warring the Christian warfare, no example so stimulant as that of the "Captain of his salvation."—While running the Christian race, he can look at no object with so cheering an effect, as "unto JESUS the author and finisher of his faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

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Finally, we would again exhort the Christian to seek this grace earnestly in prayer. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The very exercise of prayer is an antidote against impatience. It composes the mind, and dissipates fear. It has been often seen, that the suffering believer, by the cultivation of a prayerful spirit, has so glorified the Lord in the fires, as to excite the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant and ungodly world. The patient cheerfulness with which he has been able to bear up, under the most distressing circumstances, has been matter of surprise to many, to whom the sources of his assistance were invisible. They saw him not in his retirement; they heard not his devotions; they knew not the confidence he derived from them, and they wondered at the strength of his mind. But the praying Christian well knows that his strength is not his own. He knows that it is from above, and that thence he must fetch it, in frequent and fervent prayer. He can be in no case, however trying, in which the prayer of humble reliance will not be available. He has the promise of God for it: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." It is in prayer he holds a conference with God, and engages him to become his confederate, and to send Omnipotence to his aid. Then do his graces shine out with peculiar lustre, and the most profitable effect. The weak are strengthened, and the timid are encouraged, by his example; and salutary impressions made even on the wicked and un-

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believing. His own peace is established, his heart is fixed; and he rises, with placid contentment and patient hope, above all his griefs. He goes in the strength of the Lord his God, and sings with the prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!"

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CHAPTER IX.

GODLINESS.

CHRISTIANITY, being a dispensation emanating from infinite wisdom, is perfect in all its parts. It embraces man in all his relations, and provides for his interests in each. Hence we find it legislating to his entire moral being, whether as an individual conscious of, and seeking, personal happiness,—as a social being, forming a part of the great family of his kind,—or as a creature of God, dependent on, and accountable to, him. In this universality of its character the Christian receives his religion. He admits its claims to prescribe to his faith, to regulate his life, and to controul the very thoughts and imaginations of his heart. The Apostle, therefore, in the Characteristics of the Christian which he has given us, fails not to exhibit his religion in all its important aspects. While he inculcates on the Christian the duties which he owes to himself and to the community, he is careful to remind him, that his morality must be founded upon, and actuated by, his religious principles. It is not enough that he exemplify the active and passive virtues, as a man and a neighbour; that he be *temperate* and *patient*; that he live soberly and righteously;—he

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must also live *godly* in this present world. Many striking exhibitions of self-government, and of patient, unrepining endurance of evil have been given to the world, independent of religious influence, and even where Revelation was altogether unknown. There have been minds naturally vigorous, which, without the aids of piety, have sustained the manly and amiable virtues that usually excite applause:—many have been trained to them by the rules of morality and philosophy. But the virtues of the Christian must be of a higher order. They must originate from a purer source; and be maintained in their strength and beauty by the same energy which wrought them on the character at first. The mere disciple of morality or philosophy is commonly actuated by some ruling passion which is flattered by the temporary subjugation of other passions in the bosom; the Christian's paramount feeling is his reverential and grateful love of God, which "casteth down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The moralist, or philosopher, displays his virtues, whatever they may be, without acknowledging the authority of God, and without reference to his glory;—the Christian does all, and suffers all, in resignation to the divine appointment; and, "whatsoever he does, whether he eat or drink, he does all to the glory of God." The object of the one is earthly and temporal; that of the other, heavenly and eternal. The principle

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of the one is vain-glory; that of the other, GODLINESS. The Christian will be careful to maintain good works; but not for selfish, or worldly, ends. He will not make a parade of his moral excellences, either for human applause, or self-gratification. He acts not from a love of virtue as its own reward, or a proud sense of honour and integrity; but he goes forth to meet all the arrangements of God respecting him,—his conscience owning the supreme authority of God,—his mind enlightened with the truth of God,—and his heart filled with the love of God, and ever aiming at a perfect conformity to his character and will. In every correct enumeration, then, of Christian Characteristics, one of the most prominent, as being the most influential, is Godliness.

The term used by our Apostle in this place, which is rendered *Godliness*, signifies in strict language, *right*, or *acceptable worship*, or, the *due performance of religious duties*. But we apprehend that the Apostle, by the classification he assigns it, evidently intends it a more diffusive and significant import. He has something more interesting and more profitable in view, than merely to remind the Christian of those acts of religion which are to distinguish him from false and ignorant worshippers. He is inculcating this truth,—that all his virtues must be sanctified with the *religious* principle; that they must flow from God, and tend to God; that all his good works must be "wrought in God;" that his every feeling,—every word,—and every

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performance, must have the unction of piety, to be really good and "acceptable with God."

Godliness, indeed, if taken in its widest extent, might be made to include all the expressions of the religious character. It is that gracious principle implanted in the heart of a Christian, which has to do with all his experience and with all his practice. To be godly is, according to the Apostle Paul's description, "to put off concerning the former conversation, the *old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to be renewed in the spirit of the mind; and to put on the *new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Hence it is very evident that Godliness, as a temper of the mind, is the effect of a *renewing* power,—a *creation*, by the Spirit of God, into his own image. He applies the blood of *atonement* to the conscience of the believer, which purifies from the corruptions of the old man, or the natural state; he presents to his faith the righteousness of the Redeemer, as his acquittal from the condemnation of the law; and infuses into the mind and heart those principles and desires which are inseparable from the new creature. As the instincts of animal nature impel continually to whatever is necessary to its support and gratification, so the desires and affections of the new man, or spiritual life, tend invariably towards God, in the exercises of faith and love,—in copying the divine perfections; and in

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the devotion of the entire man to his service and glory. It is thus the godly character is formed, and thus it is expressed.

Our limits confine us, in our farther consideration of this subject, to but a few leading thoughts. We observe,

1. That the Christian, as a *godly* character, entertains an habitual *Reverence* for the majesty and authority of God. The ungodly are precisely those who have no fear of God before their eyes. They may, indeed, and often do, affect to speak of him, and attend his worship, with much awe and reverence. They will "keep their fasts, and afflict their souls; they will bow down their heads as bulrushes; and spread sack-cloth and ashes under them." But this the Spirit of God denounces as "drawing near him with their mouth, and honouring him with their lip, while the heart goeth after its covetousness, and is far removed from him." The reverential feeling of the godly man has its seat in the heart; and his every act of worship, his every example of obedience so far from being assumed for the occasion, is the natural expression of the inward grace. With him it is a holy, humble, child-like fear of God, by which he "stands in awe and sins not." It is a tender and conscientious regard to the divine will in all things—a lowly, submissive, and self-abasing temper of mind, under all the aspects of Providence towards him. It is a temper necessarily formed out of

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an enlightened view of God in the various relations in which he stands to the Christian. Some of these are common to him with all intelligent creatures; and it is to be observed, that the more exalted the intellect, the more holy the nature of the beings whom God has created, the more profound their reverence before him. As the Christian, therefore, advances in knowledge and purity, as he more fully participates the love of God, and delights in his service, this quality of Godliness, this resemblance to the feelings of holy Angels, will more eminently mark his character. He will entertain a holy fear of God, and render him an unquestioning subjection, as his Creator, his supreme Lord and Legislator; he will adore him, as his holy Inspector and Superintendant;—he will reverence and obey him as his heavenly Father; and unreservedly sacrifice his own wishes, and his own reasonings, to the ordination and the guidance of his God. So powerful, indeed, is the impression which the contemplation of God's majesty often makes on the mind of a humble Christian, that he exclaims with the Psalmist, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." But this is not the fear of a slave under the frown of a wrathful and remorseless tyrant. It is the dread which a creature, conscious of his own imperfection and demerit, may justly feel in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God. Such has ever been the experience of the devoutest of God's people; and where it is duly felt, it is a token of good, and not of evil. It is no just ground of dismay to any humble believer in Christ, that he is conscious of a

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great degree of awe in the presence of his God. Let him not interpret it to his own discouragement, nor be deterred, by such consciousness, from a devout and confiding approach to the Almighty, as his friend and Father in Christ Jesus. Such a frame becomes him. He is the better prepared for engaging profitably in the worship of God, and in the contemplation of his adorable perfections. His spirit is then in better harmony with the heavenly host, who are represented, in their strains of praise, as exclaiming, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord! and glorify thy name?" This is the frame of mind which God, by the mouth of his prophet, requires his people to cultivate, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your *fear*, and let him be your *dread*." And this feeling towards God is by no means incompatible with the hope and confidence which his goodness inspires. It is not incompatible with the joy which his gracious communications light up in the heart of the Christian. Its presence is even necessary to temper every other affection which has the Divine Being for its object. Without this, indeed, the confidence of a creature before his Creator would be an indecent familiarity; and his joy, unwarranted presumption. Hence we are admonished by the Psalmist to "serve the Lord with *fear*; and to rejoice with *trembling*." To the same purpose is the language of the Apostle, even when he is alluding to the distinguished

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privileges of the Gospel; "Wherefore," says he, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with *reverence* and Godly *fear*: for our God is a consuming fire." What we are here taught is evidently this; that, while the grace of God alone enables us to render him acceptable service, that service he teaches us to render *in the spirit of reverence and godly fear*. It is also very observable, that in all the religious exercises of the people of God recorded in Scripture, this *reverential* affection is peculiarly prominent. In fine, it is a state of the heart to be especially cultivated, as required, at once, by the character of God, by the worship we owe him, and by the nature of personal progress in the divine life.

2. Another quality of Godliness is that *Confidence* or *Trust* in God, which involves a ready acquiescence of the soul in all his arrangements. As this is a fruit of the Spirit by which God is peculiarly glorified, it is essential to a *godly* character. It grows out of a deep and full conviction of a sufficient guarantee in the attributes and perfections of God for support, and safety, and ultimate glory. It is an exercise of mind depending much for its life and vigour on correct and enlightened views of the Divine character. The more intimate and exalted our knowledge of God, the more full and implicit will be our Confidence in him. It is only as we are assured of the competency of my

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quarter to afford us the aid or protection we need, that we are disposed to give it our Confidence. Upon a similar principle do we repose our trust in God. We recognize in his omnipotence an assurance that he is "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think;" and we stay our minds upon him.—We are persuaded of his unerring wisdom, and we commit our ways to his direction; we resign ourselves to his disposal, and say, "not *our* wills, but *thine* be done."—We doubt not his goodness, "who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not;" and we come "*boldly* to a throne of grace to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help us in time of need."—We know him to be true and faithful; and rely with entire security on the fulfilment of every promise on which he has caused us to hope.—We believe in his unchangeable, everlasting love to his people, in Christ Jesus; and we cleave to him with an unreserved and delighted Confidence; and in our devotional approaches, pour out, as it were, into his bosom all the fears, and desires and anxieties, that share our hearts, from time to time. It follows, that to refuse our Confidence and resignation to God is doing him manifest injustice. Where this is the case, or where the reliance is not entire, there God's true character is either wholly unknown, or very imperfectly studied. He is in himself an inexhaustible fountain of good. No case can be too needy, no desire too large, for his resources; and, that he is ready to bestow every desirable blessing on the seeking Chris-

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tian, his word abundantly proves. There is, indeed, no disposition of mind more powerfully encouraged, none more forcibly inculcated, in the Holy Scriptures, than implicit reliance on God. He claims it of his children, in right of his relation to them; he exhorts, he invites, them to it, in consideration of their necessities.—"Commit thy ways," says the Psalmist, "unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him!"

3. A third essential quality of Godliness is a *Supreme Love* to God, The true and proper meaning of Piety is *Love*. It is that affection, or fruit of the Spirit, which fulfils the import of the first and great commandment of the divine law. This is plainly taught us in the answer of our Lord to the question of the Scribe;—"Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is,—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."—"The love here enjoined," says a late excellent Divine, "is required to exist in such a degree, as to occupy the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind, and the whole strength. The import of this command may be stated thus; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thine understanding, and with all thy strength, throughout all thy life.* In

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other words, we are required, under the influence of this disposition, to devote, throughout our lives, all our faculties and services to the glory of Jehovah. Our heart and voices, our understanding and our hands, are to be entirely and voluntarily dedicated to his service." This is Godliness; and this supreme affection of the heart, this entire devotion of ourselves to God, is nothing more than what is due to him. In whatever light he is contemplated; whether as being himself the sum of all moral excellence; or as the source of all the beauty and all the blessedness diffused throughout his universe, he justly claims the supreme love of all his intelligent creatures.

But who of our fallen race can, in this respect, render unto God his due? Not the natural man;—his heart is carnal, and therefore *enmity* against God. Other lords have dominion over him. The world and the things that are in the world occupy the throne of his heart; and therefore the love of the Father is not in him. He is under the tyranny of usurpers, which have excluded the rightful Sovereign. The world, and the things of the world infatuate the soul, and maintain her native unbelief and blindness. Hence she puts away from her all the claims of God to her decided preference. The carnal heart is insensible to the infinite excellence of the Divine character. It is not touched with the manifestations of that excellence in the works either of creation, of providence, or of grace. Under the last of

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these it is especially unimpressible. The carnal heart is an unbelieving heart. It is therefore unmoved at the representation of God's love to a lost world, in sending his only begotten son to redeem it. It melts not under the demonstrations of the Redeemer's love in his voluntary humiliation,—his griefs,—his agonies,—his death. It closes itself against the entrance of the truth, though wooed to receive it by the most affecting and endearing considerations. But it is otherwise with the Christian. To him God has been revealed, as pardoning, reconciling, and adopting him in Christ Jesus his Son. The Holy Spirit has poured upon his mind the light of heavenly truth; and he sees his load of guilt borne away by his Divine Surety; he sees that Surety suffer in himself the penalties which *he* had incurred; he sees him take away the hand-writing of ordinances that was against him, and nail it to his cross, having blotted it out with his own blood; he sees the terrors of the law, in consequence, flee away;—and a God, once at a fearful and unfathomable distance from him, now brought nigh, in all the attractive features of a God at peace with him, and of a Father rejoicing over him to do him good. It is altogether a revelation of mercy and of free grace; and this very character of it it is, that wins the love of the renewed soul in return. And though the Christian, in his best moments, falls infinitely short of the returns due to Divine love, yet to such returns it is that his grateful heart ever strives to rise. He cannot view a sponta-

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means Deliverer,—a sacrifice provided by the offended party,—an unmerited salvation, without grateful astonishment; nor realize the whole boon as his own, without feeling that the warmest affection of which he is capable is due to God; and that God has established the highest possible right to a preference above all other objects in the thoughts of his mind, and the business of his life. He feels that he is not his own; that he is "bought with a price," and such a price as binds him to his Purchaser by the strongest and most delightful ties. He would not dissolve them, if he could. He would not be his own, and unindebted to his God, were it a possible condition. The stronger he feels his obligations, the more he loves. The gratuitous manner in which his salvation is brought him, gives it in his estimation, its loveliest feature, and powerfully excites him to grateful obedience. When he thus views his relation to God in Christ, his heart greatly rejoices, and he exclaims, "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me. Herein is love, not that I loved him, but that he loved me, and sent his son to be the propitiation for my sins." The love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit has a kindling effect;—the love of gratitude is powerfully excited thereby; and the language of that gratitude is "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!" This declaration, when drawn from a soul under the inspiring

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influences of the Holy Spirit, comprehends every thing in it that we mean by exalted piety, or true godliness.—It is the language of that sublime devotion which raises the soul of a Christian far above the world.—It is the breathing of that soul towards God, the highest object of her choice.—It is her exultation in the heavenly portion she has obtained, and the expression of her happiness in that portion and in that alone.

The principle of supreme love to God, at once the noblest and most powerful of the heart, may be considered as the basis of the Christian Religion. All the graces of the Spirit, all the acts of obedience, are but different modifications of love, or the results of its operation. Without love there can be no faith; for faith worketh by love. Without love there can be no obedience; for, this says John, "is the love of God that we keep his commandments;" and Paul tells us that "love is the fulfilling of the law." It is also, a powerfully transforming principle. We naturally contract the moral resemblance of whatever we most admire and love. The heart, therefore, in which this pure and heavenly attachment has been created, habitually seeks to entertain within it the supreme Object of its choice. There he resides, as in his home. The thoughts and desires flow toward him, and cling to him; and the result of habitual intercourse and communion with him is the impression of his own image on the soul.—In fine, the Christian actuated by this sublime principle is disposed

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to exemplify every other branch of the godly character. We accordingly observe further.

4. *A ruling Desire to promote the Glory of God* is another demonstration of Godliness.—We go farther; we say, that such a desire is an important, an indispensable, test of genuine Christianity. It is the necessary concomitant of love to God. If the object of our love be an elevated character, he will also possess our respect. We naturally associate every excellence with his name; we range ourselves on his side, and identify our own happiness with his reputation. Now, the Object of the Christian's highest affection is, in himself, the best and the greatest of all beings. He has derived from him every good and perfect gift he possesses, the knowledge of a Saviour,—faith to receive him,—and the hope of immortality through him. The Christian contemplates this lovely and glorious centre of his affections, as arranging and controlling all things and all events for his people's welfare, and consequently for *his;* making all things work together for his good,—hearing and answering his prayers,—protecting his soul from danger,—guiding and sustaining him in the way of truth,—supplying every grace and every consolation, in time of need; and securing to him, in an indissoluble covenant, the blessedness and glory of the heavenly world. Such a contemplation swells his heart with grateful emotions. He cleaves to the fountain of all this excellence and goodness. His name, his

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cause, his will and authority, as made known in the world, are all dearer to him than life. He stands by them, as one who lives only for them. He asks only, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do," and then, without conferring with flesh and blood, goes forward to obey. Enough for him that God wills it; he addresses himself to action, nothing doubting of his aid. His entire devotion to the will of God he conceives to be his *reasonable* service. He has no interest separate from the cause of his Divine Master. To maintain that cause he feels to be more binding upon him than to preserve his own life. He identifies himself with all that is God's. The name of his Redeemer is precious to him. He rejoices in its honours, and weeps when it is insulted. The extension of his empire in the world is an object which he ardently desires; for which he constantly prays; and, as far as his sphere permits, for which he willingly labours. The enemies of the Cross he reckons *his* enemies; but the friends of Him that died thereon he esteems as the excellent of the earth, and associates with them.

He seeks to glorify God in all the departments of his life. In his *Retirements*, his deepest seclusions from the world; he is then not only conscious of being under divine inspection, but he earnestly cultivates communion with his God. It is then he indulges most the effusions of his devotional spirit, pouring into the ear of his heavenly Father what he cannot divulge to the

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dearest friend or relative on earth. Withdrawing from the glare of day and bustle of business, the Christian meditates, with less distraction, on the law of God, and the Gospel of his grace. He studies with more collected regard the divine character, as manifested in creation, in providence, and in redemption. Hence his soul rises into higher admiration of that character, and glows with warmer love;—hence his mental powers are strengthened, his knowledge increased, the comforts of his religion multiplied, his growth in grace promoted, and he comes out with fresh stores, and fresh purpose, to glorify God in all his social relations.

In his *Family*; whatever his station in the family be, the Christian studies to fill it in the way most conducive to the glory of God, and the benefit of those immediately around him. If a *Master* and *Father*, his authority, his personal example, and his domestic instructions, will be employed to the honour of religion. He will act on the principle of Joshua, who professed before an assembled nation, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He will enjoin upon his household, with whatever influence he possesses, a due regard to the will of God; he will exhort, remonstrate and entreat; he will pray *with* them and *for* them; he will warn against the way of the transgressor; he will cheer, and encourage, to the path of the just;—he will "allure to brighter worlds, and *lead* the way."

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If a subordinate member of the house;—as a *Child*, he will "obey his parents in the Lord." A pious child acknowledges his filial obligations, not only to be founded in nature, but solemnly and forcibly enjoined by the word of God. Under this view of them, his obedience affords him double pleasure; he is blessed with the sacred and delightful satisfaction, that in yielding to the finest and most amiable impulses of nature, he is at the same time, honouring and glorifying God, his heavenly Father; that while he cherishes in his heart the name of father and mother, with emotions of reverence and love, he is fulfilling the express injunction of the God and Father of all the families upon earth, who, with his own fingers, wrote this law for universal observance, "Honour thy Father and Mother, that thy days may be long." Nor will he deem his obligations annulled, should his parents be strangers, or even enemies, to the truth as it is in Christ. Such a condition of things, is, indeed, to a pious child extremely painful. But, without compromising his duty to God, for the gratification of his earthly parent, on the one hand, or outraging the obligations of filial piety, under the sanction of religion, on the other, he will consider this difficult position given him, for more eminently glorifying God by the exercise of those lovely graces which it especially calls for. A conduct peculiarly delicate and prudent is demanded of him, while a firm, unvacillating preference is given, at heart, to the authority of Christ. He will feel it dutiful to sustain a meek, respectful, and

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even affectionate endurance of injuries from such a quarter, and at the same time, abide by a uniform and honourable, though modest and discreet, testimony to the truth. He will consider himself bound to seek, by all becoming means, the spiritual welfare of his parents. He will be incessant in fervent prayer for their conversion. He will encourage them to embrace the faith, by personal example, by conversation, and by the company he frequents. In all this he will greatly commend the religion of Jesus, and eminently glorify Him whom he is engaged supremely to love and obey.

As a *Brother*, he will ever consider the children of his own parents as claiming his warmest affections and his kindest offices. He will cultivate every becoming feeling of the fraternal relation; not as due to the law of nature only, but to the commandment he has received of God, that "he who loveth God, love his Brother also."

As a *Servant* in the family; the Christian will seek to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour," by that obedience to his Master "according to the flesh," which the Holy Spirit enjoins upon him. He will account his Master "worthy of all honour," and discharge the duties of his condition, "not with eye-service, as a pleaser of men, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will,

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doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." Under the influence of Godliness, his obedience will be characterised with due respect, strict fidelity, and cheerful promptitude. He will be careful, though under the yoke, to maintain a good name. Not from the *pride of character*, that he may boast from place to place of his fair reputation,—how he can defy the tongue of scandal to fasten a stain upon it! and how he can show himself any where, and every where without a blush! No, the object of the Christian, in whatever station, is not self-applause, but the glory of God. A truly pious servant will labour to preserve a pleasing, trust-worthy character, and to acquit himself well before men, that through him "the way of truth may not be evil spoken of." He will infinitely prefer the commendation of the Gospel, and its salutary influence on others, through his instrumentality, to all the flattery the world can lavish on him, and to all the pecuniary rewards his best services can claim. His primary regard will be to his Divine Master. He will carry himself contentedly in his station, as appointed him of God; he will seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to the right discharge of his duties; he will ever remember that he is amenable to a higher tribunal than that of man; and that his character and conduct will be weighed by One who is no respecter of persons; and "that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

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Again, as a *Member of the Church* of Christ, the Christian will evince a ruling desire to promote the glory of God,—in his respectful and kind attention to the Pastor who "watches for his soul as he that must give account;"—in his conscientious observance of the laws and regulations on which church-fellowship is founded;—in his devout, cordial, and constant attendance to all the institutions of God's house, and in an intercourse with his fellow-members exemplary for meekness, self-denial, kindness, and piety.

And finally, the Christian will be actuated by this godly principle in all his relations to society at large. In his concerns with the world, he forgets not that his first concern is with heaven. He suffers not the cares and the bustle of common life to darken his understanding against spiritual realities; nor to usurp the throne of his heart, to the exclusion of his God and Saviour. He goes not into the engagements of the world merely to acquit himself in them to the world's satisfaction. He is aware that his path through life should be a shining path; but not to attract the gaze of admiration to his own person. He is to labour in deeds of justice, and generosity, and benevolence; but not to make a proud appeal to the testimony of men, or to minister to his own complacency, and to say, "When the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help

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him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon *me*; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." No, he has a higher aim than all this. With him it is a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment. He knows that the finest achievements among men may be accomplished, and the highest prize of human applause be won, and yet the Christian's great purpose not even attempted. He admits the claims of the world to his honourable and his charitable services, and these he will satisfy; but he cultivates a deep impression of the paramount claims of God on all the motives, all the principles, of his conversation and conduct. The motives of a mind that limits its views to the things of time, can only be secular, and therefore weak and uncertain; but those of the Christian heavenly, and therefore pure, forcible, and uniform. The man of the world proceeds on a false principle, building his happiness on a perishable basis. The Christian is established on the rock of ages, and identifies his happiness with the glory of God. The ultimate object of the one is sordid wealth, or the homage of men;—that of the other, the riches of Christ, and the honour of serving in his cause. The one moves in a region of delusive phantoms, and confiding all his interests to refuges of lies, is hastening to the fiery trial and condemnation of a conscience whose voice he is now suppressing, and of a holy and just God, whom he now insults;—the other, enlightened from above, sees far beyond the shifting and dying scenes of the present

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state, into the great and glorious things of a better world; and seeking to promote the honour of his God and Saviour by a cordial obedience to his will, is running that course which will assuredly bring him to "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give him at that day."

To these obvious and necessary qualities of genuine Godliness, we need only add, that another of its main and essential features is,

5. *Conformity to the image of God.* We have already observed that the Christian's supreme love to God is a *transforming* principle. It tends to the formation of the Divine image by cherishing the Divine presence in his heart. The delight and frequency with which his thoughts dwell on the object of his highest regard, and the habitual disposition wrought in him by the Holy Spirit to meditate on the character and works of God, prompt him to imitation. He cherishes with peculiar relish the remembrance of the divine word, in all its gracious revelations, and in all its holy precepts; and this remembrance is influential, sweetly constraining him to the choice and obedience of whatever that word approves. He studies the divine features more especially as they are depicted in the Gospel of Christ. In Him who is the object of his faith, "dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The son of God manifested in the flesh, and exhibited in the Gospel "is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his per-

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son." It is therefore in the temper and life of the blessed Jesus that the godly man is enabled so to study the character of God, and so to feel the impression which that character, displayed in the Redeemer's history, is powerfully fitted to produce, as to grow into a resemblance,—to "become partaker of the divine nature." In the character and in the doings of Jesus he beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Christian sets his Lord before him as his pattern. He sees in him the standard of all possible excellence; and he seeks out of his fulness to become all that he is required to be. His main concern as a Christain, he feels, is to follow the steps of Christ to have the same mind in him which was also in his Divine Master; and to prove his abiding in him by "walking as he walked!"—in fine, "to put on the Lord Jesus,"—to be dressed after him, the only true and perfect pattern, into all the graces of the new man, and a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light."

But if this is so for a *Scriptural* account of Godliness, (and we have endeavoured to make it so) there are many, we fear, who content themselves with something infinitely less. That of which we have been speaking is a NEW CREATION; its frequent substitute, a delusion of the mind. True Godliness is a divine principle; the other, a mere notion. The one is the life of God in the soul;—the other, a false show before the world. The one is power,

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the other, only *form*. Now, the heart of man being deceitful above all things, will cleave to any flattering delusion, rather than submit to the truth. An occasional show of solemnity and parade is enough for some; others rest complacently in the correct views they have obtained of Religion, and the zeal they display in the religious world. Some forgetful of the Saviour's caution, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," spend their lives in the vain experiment of uniting the things of Christ with those of the world. This is a strong, and a very general delusion. The pleasures of the world,—it gains,—its good opinion,—its honours, hold in awful fascination a large portion of mankind. These they find it difficult, impossible, to abandon; and they contrive to pursuade themselves, that neither is it necessary. With this propensity to the world, they have, nevertheless, a conscience that will not be at ease, without some homage paid to religion. Some profession is accordingly made; and, to keep terms with this inward monitor, whose voice would else be loud and angry, a round of duties is performed; prayers are practised; the sanctuary attended; the ministers and people of Christ treated with respect; and some pecuniary aids afforded to the Christian cause. Thus conscience is quieted and laid to sleep, and the world's favour, perhaps, conciliated. But, while they are thus carrying it to their own satisfaction, and that of their neighbours, God is all the while slighted and neglected, and the soul cheated of her best interests. He with whom they

have most to do in this matter, is least of all consulted. With such characters, not the will of God, but the opinions of men respecting that will, are received as the rule; and not the glory of God, but some selfish and secular purpose, is the object pursued. This, so far from being Godliness, is an abomination, in the sight of God. It is a practical denial of his right to the heart, although he demands it; it is an insulting preference given to the world, which he has denounced; it is the mockery of a formal worship, which he "cannot away with;" and is, therefore, a state of things exposed to the most fearful consequences. Whatever a man, who thus deals with God and his own soul, may think, or say, of himself, he is pronounced by his Judge, an *Idolater*. He that loves the world, in any of its aspects, more than he loves God, is an Idolater. Whatever creature usurps the throne of the heart is the Idol there; and it is hardly necessary to add, that the worshipper is self-excluded from the kingdom of God, who against every such character has already recorded his judgment,—"Therefore shall he eat of the fruit of his own way, and be filled with his own devices."

There is yet, a particular class of characters which faithfulness requires us to specify, in this place, and to which we would direct some cautionary observations. The very ardent zeal, and distinguished liberality of some professors of religion, in the present day, have deservedly procured them the admiration and esteem of

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the Christian world. They seem devoted, in person and property, to schemes of benevolence and the propagation of the truth. It is grateful to contemplate them as so many columns of strength and beauty, supporting and adorning the various noble Institutions now in vigorous operation. We rejoice in what we take to be the power of our benevolent religion over the natural selfishness of the human heart, especially in the case of those who sacrifice their personal ease, and luxurious indulgences, and pride of station, or of birth, to visits of relief to "the fatherless and widows in their affliction," or to generous contributions for the spread of the Gospel of Christ;—but these characters, confessedly amiable and useful, may exist, and yet the heart not be right with God. They may gain the suffrages of their fellow men, and yet God acknowledge them not. They may stand out as honourable exceptions from numerous characters around them. They are in a state, perhaps, to challenge society to bear witness of any evil against them. They may not be, as many other men, "extortioners, unjust, or adulterers;—they may even appear exemplary, as professors of religion; they may "fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all they possess;" and so, establish among men a claim not to their acquittal only, but to their kindest acknowledgments and loudest approbation:— yet may they be living under the frown of a neglected, but heart-searching God. All this excellency of character, and all its consequent applause from

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men, may be earned upon principles sufficiently at variance with the will of God, as to render such a character not only worthless, but odious in his sight. God says, "My Son, give *me* thy heart; and love not the world, nor the things of the world."—In the case we are supposing, the heart may be given to the world: vain glory, or some secular pursuit, may be the main object. God says, "There is none righteous, no, not one," and describes human nature as an "unclean thing," and all its righteousness as "filthy rags."—This man of splendid character, who "outwardly appears righteous," before his neighbours, may arrogantly deem himself an exception; and on no other warrant than his own good works, and the testimony of the world, be making proud claim to the approval and favour of God. To such a man the humiliating doctrines of the Gospel seem no wise applicable. He easily believes what the vanity of his own heart and the flattery of the multitude tell him; and he cannot persuade himself that all his zeal, and all his benevolence, and all his religious services, are to be utterly renounced and go for nothing in the question of acceptance with God. Thus his good deeds and his high reputation prove a snare to his soul. He loses sight of his personal need of faith in the atonement of Christ; and, orthodox as the form of his creed may be, it is only with reference to the rest of the world, and not with self-application, that he assents to the Apostolic doctrine, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he

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saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

It follows, then, that the characters we have alluded to are exposed to peculiar temptations, against which the utmost vigilance is necessary. Their own motives in every good work should be subjected to the severest scrutiny;—their every emotion under the praise of the world, should be looked after with a holy jealousy. But this exercise of the mind must be under efficient direction. It will avail them nothing, if conducted in dependence only on their own sagacity. They must seek, and obtain the aid of the Holy Spirit, from whose search nothing can be hid. Their frequent prayer should be that of David, "Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

To be truly godly, all must be done with a view to the glory of God. To this all must be made subservient,—the world, and all its engagements, self and all its associations. The claims which God has upon us extend to all that we have, and all that we are. An enlightened conviction of the truth, that we are, in no sense our own, would lead us to acquiesce in the demands of Godliness. We should see that we belong entirely to Him that made us,—that independance of Him is neither possible, nor desirable,—that every power of the mind, every emotion of the heart, every earthly

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possession, and every position of our circumstances, are rightly his; and are as so many talents of which He is truly the proprietor, having entrusted them with us, to "occupy until he come." We should feel that, in so far as we lost sight of him in the application of any part of any of these, we are robbing God of his own, diverting it to a forbidden purpose; or hiding some talent of his in the earth, and risking the condemnation and punishment of the unprofitable servant, who slandered his Master, and abused his bounty. Godliness is the right occupation of the talents God has given us;—ungodliness is the alienation of them to other purposes than his glory, and so denying his claims to the returns which he expects them to yield.

The Christian, as he grows in the experience of divine things, is increasingly impressed with the importance of cultivating Godliness. He feels the truth of the character which the Apostle has given to this grace of the Spirit,—"It is profitable unto all things." It is essential to the right exhibition of all his duties. It is with *godly sorrow* he is to trace the sins of his own heart, and to exercise repentance towards God; the truth which he is required to acknowledge is "the truth which is after *Godliness*; and the life which he is expected to live in the world is "a quiet and peaceable life, in all *Godliness* and honesty." To succeed in these great objects,—to bring out this genuine Characteristic, the Christian must abide in Christ. "As the branch

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cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can he, except he abide in Christ." This union is declared to be reciprocal. He that abides in Christ, has the Spirit of Christ also abiding in him. Thus is he taught of Christ the character and the will of God. From this union he obtains a spiritual discernment to know and to follow the truth; to avoid the deceitful maxims, and the crooked practices of the ungodly,—"having no fellowship with their unfruitful works; but rather reproving them;" and to honour his Divine Master by exhibiting his moral likeness before the world, in the benevolence, the purity, and the Godliness of his life.

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CHAPTER X.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS.

Among the many striking evidences of the divine origin of Christianity, the truly benevolent character of its admonitory and preceptive parts is one of the most impressive. It is one, too, so very conspicuous, as to present itself to common observation. No profound research, no critical accumen, are required to discover it. He that runs may read it in the Gospel of Christ. It is not merely by inference from the general bearing of its various instructions that we arrive at this character of it.—The Gospel is a system of benevolence throughout.

When sin entered the world, it not only alienated man from his God, but estranged him also from his fellow man. Sin is, in its very nature, the great scourge of human society, the destroyer of individual worth and happiness, and the ceaseless creator of mutual hatred, discord, and war, in the families and communities of the world. It is the cause of all wretchedness,—of that which is dreaded in a future state, and of that which is felt in the present. It is continually engendering in the heart those antisocial dispositions which divide mankind, and make them "live in malice and envy, hateful and

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hating one another." To this evil position of things the Gospel of Christ is the only antidote. It is the message of God to a suffering world, declaring that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." The works of this arch enemy are abundantly evident in all the shapes of moral evil that afflict our race. The grand effort of malignity with which he began was *Disunion;* and it is still his favourite aim, in his devices against men. After affecting our original estrangement from God, one of its first hateful results was *Enmity between brothers.* But Christ came on an errand of Love. The work given him to do was that of *Reunion.*—It was his to reconcile men to God and to one another. His Gospel is, therefore, that system which reveals the Almighty himself, devising and accomplishing, in the salvation of man, the restoration of that moral rectitude and beauty which sin had distorted and defaced. And this he does by such a display of grace as powerfully subdues the selfish and unamiable passions of the soul; and creates, and stimulates into lively action, all the grateful and benevolent affections which attach us to our God and to our kind. Wherever this benign system has found its way, it has, more or less, operated these happy results. It travels the habitable parts of the earth, and under its heavenly influence "the desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose." A faithful history of its progress in the world would illustrate and establish this fact. It would be found that Christianity, like the sun of the

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moral world, as it diffused its rays over one portion of mankind after another, brought light, and life, and gladness, with it; that, where its influence had not yet been felt,—there were "the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty,"—there, under all possible varieties of merely human institutions, the state of society was that of chaotic deformity, and revolting pollution; but that, when visited by the light of this holy Religion, darkness flew away; order succeeded to tumult, purity to sensuality; and amity, and all the mild and social affections, to malice, violence, and revenge. This amelioration is more or less evident in all places where the Gospel is known, but it gains in extent and value in proportion as that Divine system is cordially received and carefully practised. That it is, indeed, a system of universal happiness, no mind rightly disposed to inquire into its character can fail to acknowledge. The doctrines it reveals and the precepts it lays down could emanate only from a God at once holy, just, and benevolent.

It has, consequently, been, and ever must be, found, that Christianity alone supplies the highest and best motives to a virtuous and happy life. In representing God as the supreme object of our love and obedience, it most powerfully teaches us the duty of benevolence to our fellow men. So closely are these modifications of our love made to stand together in the sacred Scriptures, that the reality of the one is there made the test

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of the other. An Apostle tells us expressly, "If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar,"—And if we seek an evidence of our love to our neighbour, especially to our Brethren in Christ, the same Apostle refers us to the state of our affections towards God;—"By this we know that we love the children of God, if we love God and keep his commandments." Our blessed Lord is remarkable for embodying in his own example the finest maxims of good will to men. He "went about doing good," and might be said to have clothed himself with benevolence, as with a garment. He taught the second commandment in conjunction with the first and greatest commandment, establishing beween them the connexion of principle and result. He inculcated in his discourses, and demonstrated in his practice, all those amiable affections by which alone society is harmonized and made happy. His benedictions were pronounced emphatically on the meek, the merciful, the peace makers, and the forgiving. On that relative duty, in particular, which we make the subject of the present Chapter, he insists in a manner peculiarly tender and earnest. He always regarded his disciples, and taught them to regard themselves, as a FAMILY OF BROTHERS. In this capacity he addresses them, when he says, "Little Children a new Commandment I give unto you, that ye *love one another*; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another." We here see him putting the highest honour on this

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Christian Characteristic, and enforcing it by arguments of the deepest interest. As the Legislator of his people he enacts it,—it is his *new Commandment*. As the Head of his family, he alleges his own example, *as I have loved you*. As our Counsellor and Friend he urges it for a testimony to the world, *by this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples*. In accordance with this spirit of their Master, the disciples inculcated the same amiable principle on all the Christian Churches. "This is the message says John, that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And Peter, addressing himself to the Churches in Asia Minor, bears impressively on the inseparable connexion between a state of redemption and a holy life;—and, as a grand and special evidence of their faith in Christ and love to God, exhorts them to a sincere, pure, and fervent, exhibition of *Brotherly Love*.—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto *unfeigned* love of the Brethren, see that ye love one another with a *pure* heart *fervently*." The same Apostle, in the passage whence we have drawn our series of Characteristics, takes occasion to enumerate this among the Christian graces, "Add to your Godliness BROTHERLY KINDNESS."

This is one of those terms which are sufficiently plain and expressive of themselves, without any definition.

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Hardly any other form of enunciation could more easily convey its meaning; and it is surely unnecessary to attempt it. It is well known as the name of that affection which subsists between children of the same family. It is an affection recognised by mankind in general. To be destitute of it is unnatural. To possess it is, therefore, not peculiar to the Christian. But when sanctified by the grace of God that is in him, his fraternal love is then exercised with a tenderness, a solicitude, and wisdom, peculiar to the religion of Christ. In this, as in every other relative duty, his ruling aim will be the glory of God. With every disposition to cultivate his brotherly affection, he will not sacrifice to it the principles of truth and justice. The enlightening spirit of his religion forbids it. He will not be induced, through a blind partiality for those of his own house and his own flesh, to sin against the rights of society, or the paramount claims of heaven. His natural and his pious affections will harmonize. He will seek to mingle, on all proper occasions, the expressions of both. He will study to render his religion amiable in the sight of those who are necessarily the closest observers of his temper and conduct. If unhappily he be the only member of Christ's kingdom among his father's children, he will feel the peculiar responsibilities of his position. His gratitude for distinguishing grace will constrain him to labour for Christ among them. His fraternal love will carry him far beyond the common sympathies and charities of the domestic relation.

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From the exhibition of every natural virtue belonging to his place, as a brother, he will rise to higher and holier services, as a Christian. While his hand is ready to every generous office in behalf of his kinsman according to the flesh, and his exertions are freely made for his temporal interests, "his bowels will yearn upon his brother," to do him *spiritual* service. He will long to be the instrument of his conversion;—he will seek to win him to Christ; and be careful, by his own example, to recommend the ways of godliness.—He will not cease to make him the subject of affectionate intercession before the throne of God; and will "travail," as it were," in birth, until Christ be formed in him." And this desirable object will he endeavour to obtain, in the spirit of his Divine Master, who was "meek and lowly in heart," who "brake not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax," but had compassion on the ignorant and them that were out of the way."

The Brotherly Kindness, however, which the Apostle requires to be superadded to Godliness, is undoubtedly a Christian Grace. It intends, therefore, the love which subsists between, and binds together, the members of the "Household of Faith." This Household is composed of those "unto whom it is given to believe in Christ." Of whatever age, country, or condition in life, this common principle forms them into one family.

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They are, one and all of them, chosen in Christ out of a ruined and degenerate race; and born again unto God by the renewing influences of his Holy Spirit. They are, therefore, in a special and spiritual manner, the Children of God. They are expressly styled "a chosen Generation,"—implying that they belong exclusively to Him who has chosen them. Nor is this denomination given them as a merely outward distinction. There is an important and blessed truth in the relationship expressed. Believers in Christ are the Children of God by adoption,—but an adoption which communicates to them a new life. They are no longer what they were;—they are new creatures; for they are "born again; not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which abideth for ever." One is their Father, even God. They form one large family under his paternal care and government. Christ is their elder Brother, and the medium of communication, through whom they derive all necessary provision, and from whom they receive the laws and regulations, by which, as members of God's house, they are trained to his service and glory.

Now, Brotherly Love is essential to the order and harmony of a family.—"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity!" Happy is the Father of an affectionate and united family! With peculiar complacency he eyes his off-

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spring, as they exchange the brotherly and sisterly endearments which bind them to each other and to him. None but a parent that loves his house and home can tell how joy thrills through the heart, and how every pleasing and kind emotion swells into tenderness, at such a scene. The cheerful look, the courteous conversation, the gracious deportment, of the dear children, one towards another, around him, give to his home its thousand nameless charms, and render it, of all spots on the earth, the choicest and the sweetest!—The Father of believers in Christ rejoices over *his* Children when he beholds this lovely feature of his own character prevailing among them. He enjoins love and unity upon his family. It is a standing law of his House,—"Let brotherly love continue." The brotherhood of Christians is founded in love. It was the sovereign love of God the Father that chose them "in Christ Jesus, before the worldbegan." It was love that made Christ undertake and accomplish their redemption, by the sacrifice of himself; and it is in love that his Spirit quickens and sanctifies them, and makes them heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Love is the ruling principle in the economy of this House. By love their Heavenly Father regulates his providence respecting them.—The affairs of nations and individuals are made to subserve their interests. In love he chastens them to wean them from lower attractions, and make them "partakers of his holiness." In love he sends them his word, to be "a lamp unto

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their feet and a light unto their path." His love utters the threatenings of the law, to reclaim them from error; and speaks the promises, to invigorate their faith and hope. What important considerations for the Children of such a Father to abound in the grace of Love towards Him and to each other! It is their indispensable Characteristic. The Christian, under the influence of a contrary spirit, is distorting a main feature of the family-likeness, and forgets the maxim of the beloved Disciple, "God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God and God in him."

This amiable affection, belonging so necessarily to the Christian character, is inculcated with much force and variety in numerous passages of the Holy Scriptures. There, indeed, besides many direct precepts and admonitions on the subject, we meet frequent allusions to it, as a special ingredient in other Christian duties. Our relative obligations are not considered as fulfilled, unless in this Spirit. On the other hand, where this spirit is exercised, there all the laws of social life are said to receive their fulfilment. An Apostle speaking of the requirements of the second Table, tells us that "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law; for this thou shalt not commit adultery,—thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness,—thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

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Every view, therefore, of this feature of his character is important to the Christian. We will remark briefly on its *Source*, its *Measure*, its *Qualities*, and its *Forms of Exercise*.

1. This Brotherly Kindness is very different from that particular attachment to a separate and distinct class of men, which may, or may not, be justifiable, but which is apt to degenerate into an exclusive partiality, not to be commended, but deplored. It is an affection of a more exalted origin, than any *natural* feeling, however refined by human culture. It is a *gracious* principle.—It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's influence on the heart of the Christian. When this Divine Dispenser of all grace reveals himself to him as the Spirit of Adoption, he recognizes his new relationship to God and to his people. The love of God shed abroad in his heart, which excites him, with filial emotion, to cry "Abba, Father," creates also within him a fraternal affection for all that know and love the Redeemer. He loves them with a love of complacency, as fellow heirs with himself of the promises in Christ. He loves them as members in common with him of Christ's mystical body, deriving their life from the same Divine Source, and manifesting that life by the same grace, to the glory of Him who gave it. He loves them, as the objects of the Father's Love. The impress of his image upon them gives them in his estimation, a title to his love, and sweetly attracts him to every becoming expression of Brotherly Kind-

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ness. It is evident that this is purely a Christian feeling and can originate from nothing less than a Divine operation.

II. As to the *Measure* of this Brotherly affection, we find the estimate given in our Lord's summary of the Moral Law,—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." This command, it is to be observed, intends an *evangelical* love,—that kind and degree of love which is exercised towards ourselves, on principles agreeable to the religion of Christ. It enjoins a disinterested regard to the claims of others; and forbids that selfishness which would intercept a neighbour's rights, or in any way depreciate his interests. It exacts not for others an entire equality of love, in kind and degree with that which we *naturally* exercise towards ourselves,—a measure we are physically unable to yield; but it requires of us that honourable impartiality and that Christian benevolence towards others, which, in our various places and relations with them, we reasonably expect them to render to us. In other words, and those of the same authority, we are taught, that "all things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we are to do even so to them." Now, if this be the Measure of love required of us by the religion of Christ to our neighbours in general, or which is the same thing, to our fellow creatures at large, we are certainly bound by an equally elevated standard of love to the Household of faith. There are undoubtedly superior and

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inferior claims. That benevolence, which includes justice, forbearance, meekness, charity, we owe to all; but the characters and circumstances of men differ greatly, and necessarily and inevitably demand a difference in the kind and degree of affection we owe them. A neighbour in sickness or want claims our compassion, and, if we have the means, our aid. This kind of benevolence we render without reference to character or class in society,—it is the love of our species. To our kindred according to the flesh we owe the ready services of *natural affection*. But to a Brother in Christ we owe the benevolence of *complacency*. This distinction David felt, when he said "My goodness extendeth to the Saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." The gracious principle which connects the members of Christ's household together is inseparable from Brotherly Love. It dilates the heart beyond every other emotion. It puts the Christian upon every expression of kindness towards his fellow-Christians, and that with an alacrity and decision admitting of no cold calculation about personal cost. The heart, indeed, of the genuine Christian embraces all mankind; he follows peace with all men; and seeks to promote universal happiness. But to his fellow disciples he is attached with congenial feelings, and owns himself peculiarly theirs. As a man among men, he is abroad, to do good, and to make appeals in behalf of the truth;—as a Christian among Christians, he is at home,

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for the mutual enjoyment and profit of pious converse, and the reciprocations of Brotherly Kindness.

III. There are some *Qualities* belonging to this Grace of the Spirit which deserve our notice. Of these our Apostle affords us, in another place already quoted, an enumeration sufficiently comprehensive; "Seeing ye (Christians) have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto *unfeigned* love of the Brethren, see that ye love one another, with a *pure* heart, *fervently*." Here we are at once taught that the love of the Brethren is a most important Characteristic of the Believer; and that, to be genuine, it must possess the three special Qualities of *Sincerity*, *Purity*, and *Fervency*.

1. Our profession of Love to the Brethren must be *sincere*. The character of the Christian admits of no duplicity. He can allow himself in no crooked policy. All with him must be in the simplicity of truth. Honesty and candour must mark all his dealings, in all his positions; and among his brethren, his profession of attachment must be above suspicion. Nothing can be more hollow and odious, than the show of love without sincerity; and he who is detected as a false pretender to this sacred affection is peculiarly degraded.—"Let love be without dissimulation." The mask may impose on confiding mortals, for a time. The dissembler may

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take his measures so craftily, as to escape human detection. The best of men are often the least suspicious; and hence Christian society is ever exposed to the intrusion of false Brethren. But the hypocrite can practise with success only on his fellow-man. He has to do with One against whom he can effect no deception. The God of Christians, who enjoins their mutual love, sees, through the glowing countenance of the hypocrite, the coldness of his heart; and marks with the deepest displeasure that inward malignity, which is covered by a mild and smiling exterior. "What, then, is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained upon men?—God taketh away his soul; God will not hear him when trouble cometh upon him." But the Graces of the true Christian, being the fruits of God's Spirit, partake of his nature. He is the Spirit of Truth, and every emanation from him has truth for its character. One grand result of the Christian's purification through the Spirit is "*unfeigned love* of the Brethren." Whatever is of this origin is, and must be, cordial; for the Spirit works upon the heart;—and whatever expression of kindness is not prompted by the heart is artificial, and therefore spurious, because not of divine operation. Nothing that is artificial, in the matter of Christian feeling, deserves the confidence of man, or can ever be acceptable with God. Real, inward, love alone is available; because on that only can we depend for all those amiable effects which contribute so much to the peace and harmony of Christian society. Hence this

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kind and pressing admonition. "My little Children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

2. The mutual love of Christians must be *pure*. It must not only be cordial, or felt at heart; but it must come from a *pure* heart, a heart that has been cleansed from its natural pollutions, and furnished with holy and heavenly affections. Such cleansing and such furnishing, it is evident, cannot be an achievement of our own. We have neither inclination nor adequate resources for it.—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." This is the prerogative only of the holy Spirit. Hence the prayer of David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Now, where the Spirit of God is, there is purity. When He descends into the heart, he sheds abroad the love of Christ there; and the thoughts are purified; and the graces and the good works of the Christian character are formed and brought out, to the glory of God. The Christian's love of the Brotherhood is a result of this Divine influence, and is therefore, *pure*. He cherishes no sinister, no unholy, motive in the indulgence of this affection; and is careful that nothing unbecoming shall mark his mode of expressing it. He forgets not that the Brotherhood to which he belongs is a holy association, acknowledging the God of holiness for their Father, avowing a constitution of holy principles, pursuing holiness of character, and anticipating an eternal reign of holiness in the kingdom

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of God and their Founder Jesus Christ. With impressions such as these the Christian can indulge no other than a *pure* love towards his Brethren. His only aim in all his connexions with them is the glory of their God in the harmony, happiness, and stability of his family upon earth. It is an affection which makes him long to give and receive the spiritual aid and consolations, which intercourse with no other society can afford him. It is with them only he can take "sweet counsel and walk to the house of God in company." His heart, therefore, still turns to the "Children of the Kingdom." They are his *spiritual* kindred.—He feels that he has interests in common with them, and those the highest and the dearest possible. His love to them is a love of sympathy and congeniality; and he is conscious of no other end, in his emotions concerning them, than what he can express before God in secret. Under the influence of this pure affection, his prayer to God is often that of the Psalmist, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance!"

3. To Sincerity and Purity the Christian is required to add *Fervency* of love to his Brethren. He is not to content himself with a consciousness of *real* attachment, and that from the *best* of *motives;* but he must

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cultivate a *warm heart* towards all that know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. If, indeed, the affection be sincere and pure, we may reckon on its warmth. It is a flame kindled with fire from heaven. It fails not to burn up all the selfishness and all the worldly-mindedness which contract the natural heart, and lock it up against every holy and virtuous affection. It is a dilating principle, so that where there was no room before for a godly thought, there dwell God himself and all his people;—the Christian loves them all. It is a lively and efficacious principle.—Out of its abundant action in the heart the mouth speaks the language, and the hands and feet do the works of kindness. Promptness and Perseverance in doing prove ardency of feeling; and all Christians prove, by corresponding acts and labours, the truth and fervency of their love. Their constitutional tendencies are, indeed, various; and where their mutual affection is equally sincere and strong, it will necessarily vary in its mode of expression; but in all it will, and must, have a true existence; and it will rise and glow in fervency, according to the Christian's ability and the circumstances that call it forth. The genuine Christian will seek to possess a *fervent* degree of this affection. He is urged to this by the just and proper influence on his mind of Christian principles, and by the spirit of his Master's commandment,—"A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another; *as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another." To love our fellow-Christians

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as he hath loved us would be to love them *fervently* indeed!—It becomes his disciples, each in his measure, to follow Him.

IV. Occasions for the *Exercise* of this Grace daily occur. The circumstances of the Church at large, and of Christians in their individual capacity, are ever changing; and a wakeful observation will not fail to suggest what "the duty of every day requires." No Christian duty can be in more frequent requisition than Brotherly-Kindness. The people of God live in an evil world. They belong to a species to which sin and suffering constantly adhere. Hence, even in their own circle, there are found many occurrences and conditions of things, unavoidably painful in themselves, but one great end of which is to elicit the graces of the Christian character. Sin will show itself among the Brethren, in various forms; but "love covereth a multitude of sins." Wrongs will be encountered; offences will come; but Brotherly-Kindness forgives them. Poverty, and sickness, and bitter distress, will open their mouths and complain; but Brotherly-Kindness will hasten to soothe and relieve. How useful, how amiable, is this Characteristic! The Christian whom it most distinguishes may be said to bear, with happy effect, the most prominent feature of his Divine Master. The object of this Grace is to annihilate evil, and to promote good,—to extirpate wretchedness, and establish happiness among men. This is to have the same mind

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that was also in Him "who went about doing good."

Brotherly-Kindness, if habitually cultivated, will express itself in the *Judgments we are apt to form* of our Brethren. There is an aptitude in some to take the chair of the Judge upon all occasions. No sooner is the doubtful case of a Brother stated, however partially, in their hearing, than they pass their decision. It may be a case in which they are not at all, or but little, concerned, and *their* opinion may not be called for;—or the nature of the case may be such as transcends their means or capacity of judging;—or the circumstances may admit of various construction, and require grave deliberation. But, let the case be of whatever description, these people will pronounce an immediate judgment. They hasten to conclusions, ere the premises are understood; and even anticipate decisions, ere the matter be submitted to question. Now, these hasty and officious judgments are generally of the censorious and condemnatory kind. This is the great evil. It is not the ready interposition of friendship, to check the current of slander, nor the watchfulness of the peace-maker, who hastens to build up the breach; nor the ardour of love, that hesitates not to throw the mantle over a Brother's nakedness.—Such promptitude were kind indeed, and worthy of one Christian Brother to another. But the precipitancy of which we complain has a very different issue It may proceed,

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we are willing to believe, in many persons, from a thoughtless, inconsiderate, temper. They are not, it may be, without the principle of Brotherly Love; and in their better moments, it may be observed to operate upon them. But, too apt to lend a credulous ear to some evil report against a Brother, they yield to the first unfavourable feeling, and decide unkindly, for want of thought. They pause not to reflect on the injustice and cruelty of their proceeding, as it regards their Brother, nor of the sin of which they are chargeable, as it regards themselves, in the sight of Him who has said "Judge not that ye be not judged;"—and they forget that it is written of the man who shall dwell in the holy hill of God, that "he taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour." In cases like these, how often does the evil recoil upon themselves! Time and deliberation develop the truth;—they are stung with the consciousness of their iniquitous judgment, and they humble themselves before God and their Brethren, as having sinned against both.

There are cases, however, in which, it is to be feared, the guilt of hasty judgment is deeper still. Some are grievously possessed of a carping and evil-surmising spirit, which feeds, with a degree of pleasure, on the faults and failings even of a Brother. This is a lamentable stain on any character;—but we fear our churches are not entirely pure in this respect. Many professing the religion of Christ, give, alas! too frequent evidence

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of this unhappy spirit. It suppresses within them the kind, the benevolent principles of their profession; it blinds them to the example of their acknowledged Master, and makes them reckless, at once, of their own character and that of their Brother. A word, perhaps, is dropped respecting a Christian Brother which may be favourably, or unfavourably, understood.—Brotherly Kindness would give it the best construction, and seek to stay the mischief of a censorious tongue, and put scandal out of countenance. But these people eagerly take it up, and, as if to show their malicious dexterity, they give it such a position, and dilate upon the circumstances actual, or inferential, in such a style, as to fix a suspicion—perhaps, a deep stain, on the name of the party in question. This is altogether anti-christian.—It is not only the reverse of the wisdom that is from above, but it evinces a cruelty abhorrent from a manly and generous mind.

If a Brother has *actually* fallen—if, through the force of some temptation, he has really deviated from Christian rectitude, people of this unamiable spirit will treat him without mercy. The wound, at first, was, perhaps, small; but they tear it wider. It might have admitted of an easy cure; but it rankles under their rough handling, and healing becomes difficult. This harsh, condemning, temper, we lament to say, is, indeed; too frequent among professing Christians. We would strongly remonstrate against it, as being in itself so con-

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trary to the law of Christ, and in its effects so mischievous to his Church. What grief does it occasion to Brethren of a meek and peaceable spirit, and what discouragement to many promising characters, who begin well, and, but for this severity, might persevere! What bitter dissentions does it excite among Brethren; and how does it cause the enemy to blaspheme! We would entreat professing Christians of this rigid, unrelenting temper to consider, how, instead of promoting the prosperity, they trouble the peace of Zion, and widen the breaches, which might otherwise be repaired;—how, in thus reproving sin, they commit greater sin, and violate the rules of conduct given them in the Gospel;—how those rules require them "to have compassion one of another; to love as Brethren, to be pitiful, to be courteous; to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them;"—and that, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, they who are spiritual should restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering themselves, lest *they* also be tempted." But eagerly and gratuitously to publish a Brother's faults, carefully to suppress whatever palliating circumstances might be alleged, and to show up every offensive point in the broadest character of odiousness it will bear, is not simply mistaking, but directly contradicting, the Apostolic admonitions. Men who are thus inclined to act would do well to examine what manner of spirit they are of. In vain do they urge the discipline of the

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Church, as their warrant for severe procedure. The true discipline of the Church enjoins nothing inconsistent with a true Christian spirit. The courtesy of a disciple of Christ is not, indeed, that false and dangerous principle, that leads him to flatter a Brother in his sins; neither does it oblige him to stand aloof when he falls, and leave him undisturbed in his guilt. On the contrary, he is required, according to his station and circumstances, to admonish and rebuke. He is not to "suffer sin upon his Brother;" nor by a studied, or careless, avoidance of him, refuse to interfere. But his Brotherly Kindness will be expressed in his reproofs. He is taught that it is a species of hatred to his Brother, to withhold *necessary* rebuke; but he is to administer it with Christian courtesy. He is to do it with a feeling of tenderness towards the offender;—or, as he would that it were done to himself, were he in the offender's place. He will then exclude all needless exposure, and assume no disgusting haughtiness of manner, nor a cynical harshness of expression. His object is to bring back a wanderer, not to frighten him into greater deviations:—it is to *gain* a brother, not to *lose* him. He, therefore, gladly admits of every fair palliative, and anxiously watches the symptoms of repentance, which he readily accepts. It is thus he fulfils the spirit of his Masters injunction, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and, if he repent, forgive him." A Christian in reproving is still a Christian; and if he must condemn, he forgets not that he is a Brother. The

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Apostle Paul, in addressing Timothy on the subject of discipline, thought it proper to admonish him, though the Pastor of a Church, in this cautionary language, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as Brethren. Reprove, rebuke, exhort *with all long suffering* and doctrine." Nothing is more alien from the spirit of our divine Lawgiver, than a severe, unforgiving, treatment of an offending Brother. While Christ yet ministered upon earth, he proved himself deeply "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." His heart was a fountain of mercy; and human wretchedness, in one form or other, was ever attracting and imbibing its streams. And much did he inculcate the same spirit, when he taught the people. "Blessed are the *merciful*; for they shall obtain mercy;"—and, in reproof of the harsh judging Pharisees, "Go ye, he said, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have *mercy*, and not sacrifice." A pious commentator has well observed, "The spirit of God that dwells in his Children is the spirit of meekness, and love and truth. That dove-like spirit which descended on our Saviour, is from him communicated to believers. It is the grossest impudence to pretend to be christians, and yet to entertain hatred and envyings; for there is nothing more frequently recommended to them by our Saviour's own doctrine, nothing more impressed upon their hearts, by his spirit, than love."

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Brotherly Kindness is expressed in *a disposition to sympathize* with a suffering Brother. It shows itself in soothing and consoling attentions to his wants and distresses. The Christian glowing with a sense of Divine love, is thence conscious of a higher and holier impulse given to every kind feeling of his heart. The emotions of his natural sympathy are approved and encouraged by his piety. Without piety there are many evils which contribute to impede, or misdirect, the natural flow of this humane feeling. How often does real distress plead in vain before a heart shut up in narrow selfishness, or engrossed with worldly pursuits!—and how often will *fictitious* suffering stir the feelings and draw tears from the eyes of Folly and Dissipation, which can turn away disgusted from a neighbour's *real* anguish!—The Christian is under a nobler and a truer influence. The love of God dwelleth in him; and loving Him that begat, he loveth him also that is begotten of him. He cannot, therefore, "see his Brother have need, and shut up his bowels of compassion from him." Silver and Gold he may have none; but he does not therefore, hold himself exempt from all concern. That which he has, he freely gives;—he bestows the fellow-feeling look;—he answers the tear of suffering with the tear of sympathy; he pours the balm of Christian consolation into the torn bosom;—he prays with, and for, the afflicted.—And of all this, let it not be said, the amount is nothing, or even small.—*It is* much, and vastly more than they who have never given

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nor received it, can truly estimate. The sympathizing Christian does much to lighten the burden and sweeten the sorrows of another, by imparting only what he feels; and he is encouraged in pouring out the affectionate and earnest prayer for an afflicted Brother, by the Apostle's assurance that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But the Christian who has ability for active kindness, stops not here;—he looks where and how he may be useful, and deviseth liberal things;—he turns towards the miserable, like the needle to the Pole, not merely to point out the quarter, but to bring relief. His Evangelical principles dispose him to labours of love, wherever they are needed; but where a *special* necessity exists, or the claim is most urgent, thither he directs his *readiest* and *warmest* attentions. He feels himself bound especially to respect those who are "fellow-heirs with him of the grace of life." He stops not to inquire into their rank among men, or the notoriety or obscurity of their character. It is enough that they are dear to Christ; they are dear to him also. They are members with him of that body of which Christ is the Head; and the meanest among them claims and receives his Brotherly Kindness. The more he loves and honours the Head, he is the more powerfully impelled to the care of every member. "If," says one, "there be but a thorn in the foot, the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and endeavour its help and ease." So acts Fraternal Love among the members of

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Christ's body, the church. A peculiar sympathy runs through them all. Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." While they continue to be actuated by the spirit of their elder brother, the highest will not disdain to aid and comfort the lowest. The strong will bear the infirmities of the weak. Those who are farther advanced and more matured, will promote by their counsel, their instruction, their protection and encouragement, the progress of those who are behind. "He that is greatest among them, will by his humility and condescension, "be as the younger, and he that is chief," by his obliging deportment, his self-denial, and his timely offices of aid and comfort, will "be as he that doth serve."

It is obvious, then, that Brotherly Kindness is a prominent Characteristic of the genuine Christian. It is accordingly pressed upon us in numerous precepts, and by the strongest considerations. It is represented as the badge of Christian Brotherhood; as the result of the love of God in our own souls; as essential to the imitation of Christ; and as fulfilling his law. It is even represented as forming the ground of acquittal or condemnation, at the last day! Assuredly we shall do well to keep these considerations in constant view. They are all of the most serious importance; and in all and each of them we who bear the name of Christ, are intimately and individually concerned. The stabi-

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lity and well being of the Churches to which we belong, —the honour of our common cause,—our own spiritual prosperity, and our abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, call upon us to cultivate the grace of Brotherly Kindness. Let us seek it by constant prayer and watchfulness. Let us set before us the illustrious pattern of love and mercy which our Saviour has left us. His errand to our earth was one purely of mercy and loving kindness. In divine compassion to an apostate, undeserving race it was, that he humbled himself to the work of redemption. For such a work was he anointed of the Father, and he came and "preached good tidings, and bound up the broken hearted, and gave liberty to the captives; comforted all that mourned; and gave them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."—And all this at his own cost. To procure our release, he became bound; to restore us to joy, he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; for our healing and peace, he submitted to chastisement and stripes; to obtain our pardon, he bowed under condemnation; and for our life, he poured out his soul unto death. But time and space would fail us to record all the great and the lovely points of the Saviour's work. O that this divine pattern were more habitually held in devout meditation and affectionate study by all his followers! How much greater blessings would they prove to a sinful and suffering world! How much brighter would their graces shine; and how

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much more joyfully would they pass on their way to the kingdom of glory! Feeling the subject to be thus important, we would recommend it with the utmost earnestness to the careful study of every Christian; and this we cannot do in terms more suitable than those of the Apostle to his Colossian Brethren; "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

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CHAPTER XI.

CHARITY.

THE meaning of the word which is rendered CHARITY throughout the New Testament is simply *Love*. The term Charity expresses the affection in its *generic*, or most comprehensive, sense; and is therefore the same with *Universal Benevolence*, or the *Love of our Kind*. It is that feeling which prompts us to wish well, and to do good, to all; which teaches us to look on all the sons and daughters of men as one large family with ourselves, and disposes us to take an interest in whatever is human. Christian Charity, or that which is enjoined in the Gospel, is a grace of the Spirit. It is a principle which He works in the heart, and fixes its residence there for real usefulness. It is, therefore, very different from those transient and abortive emotions, which are felt by many, only on striking and appropriate occasions. Nor is it that indolent quality, called by the world *Good nature*, which is too often little else than a *negative* character of mind, connected with a perfect satisfaction in not being chargeable with malice or mischief.

There is another counterfeit, from which, however, it is easily distinguished. We mean that speculative

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Philanthropy avowed by many, in the present day, who affect to think and speak philosophically on every subject. It deals much in high sounding terms; spurns contempteously every feeling of kindness that elects a *near* object, and delights in whatever is illimitable in compass, or unapproachable in distance. The sympathies it excites are, consequently, never available, and the good purposes of which it talks utterly impracticable. There is something vastly more vapouring than solid in this philosophic character. It would transport us over the heads of our domestic and neighbouring circles, from beyond our native shores, and far from all objects with which we are in any way conversant, or to which we have access, to the most distant and strangest regions, and find topics there on which to waste our humane and generous feelings. This is evidently a spurious Charity. It comes forth only from the imagination; and we find it often musical on the tongue, and beautiful on the page; but we never trace it to any beneficial issue. It is as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal,—noisy and pompous; but signifying nothing.

Philanthropists of this school theorize abundantly, and take credit to themselves for much benevolence. They feel, indeed, that they are released from any *practical* demonstration of that virtue, as their favourite objects are confessedly beyond their reach. Nevertheless, they lay claim, on the ground of their warmth of

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feeling and profession, to the character of disinterested kindness and exalted Charity. They complacently satisfy themselves, and would fain have others satisfied too, that but for the impossibility of the thing, they would lay themselves out for the happiness of all the forlorn and miserable tribes on the face of the earth. But, present to this philosophy a suitable test; point it to a sufferer at hand;—it is enough,—it cannot contract itself to objects so limited and so minute;—it has no sympathy with them;—the heart and the hand close against them; and contempt takes the place of humanity. Thus have we seen a pathetic declaimer against the tyranny of past ages, and the wrongs practised in distant climes, exhibit a cruel indifference to evils under his own eye, a hateful despotism at home, and an injurious conduct to his immediate neighbours. And thus have we seen wordy, high toned professions of patrotism—of hospitality—of kindness, shrink into every-day selfishness, whenever some public Institution, or some houseless stranger, or poverty-stricken individual, has invited to the proof. In fine, this Philanthropy, if it condescend at all to notice a naked brother or sister, will, perhaps, say, "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled;" but it availeth nothing; for it "giveth them not those things which are needful to the body."

Christian Charity is not of this description. It is, indeed, universal, as a principle—embracing all man-

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kind of whatever country, party, or condition in society. Nay, further, the Christian, under its operation, loves even his enemies, and desires their good. But it is an *active* principle. It is not expended on fine theories and professions. It sets the Christian upon useful exertion, whenever an occasion for its exercise appears within his reach. So far from shooting beyond the smaller objects in its vicinity, to them the Christian's Charity flies, like the electric fluid in its course, as to its nearest conductors. Like that physical agent, it is in constant motion, operating its effects in every appropriate quarter. While it diffuses his benevolent affections over the whole race of men, it prompts him to labours of love, and acts of kindness, at all attainable points. He cannot satisfy himself with the lazy wish, or the tribute of a passing sigh.—*His* Charity stirs him to contrive and to execute. He is seen filling, by personal industry in well-doing, his own limited sphere of action; and, as a master wheel in the machinery of human life, he impels others by his influence to similar activity. Unlike the philanthropists of whom we have been speaking, his object is not so much to *talk* of Charity, as to *exemplify* it; nor to *appear* charitable, as to *be* so. Under the influence of this Charity, he courts not, but shuns unnecessary prominence and personal eulogy, and is content with the most concealed agency, or the lowest office, in conveying aid and consolation to the afflicted and needy. He is not gratified merely with the success of his own beneficence, but

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rejoices greatly in the good effected by other hands unconnected with, and independant of, his. It is also in the nature of *his* Charity that he values himself not on any privation suffered, or sacrifice made, in benevolent services. He is under an habitual feeling of infinite obligation to a redeeming God; and love to him and to his fellow-men constrains him, after he has done all those things which are commanded him, to say, "I am an unprofitable servant, I have done that which was my duty to do."

But farther to illustrate our present subject, we think it right to speak of its several Qualities, or tendencies in the heart and character of the Christian. These we shall draw immediately from Scripture.

1. The Benevolence of the Gospel, or Christian Charity, *annihilates in its possessor every disposition to injure another.* "Love, says Paul, in writing to the Romans, "worketh no ill to his neighbour." It is from the want of this grace that all the injuries of society take their rise. Man, unchanged by the grace of God, loves not man. Pride and avarice are the master-passions of his soul. To serve and gratify them, men prey upon men; and, without any other restraint, than their own ideas of expedience, heap wrong upon wrong, till, as if by mutual consent, they fill the world they live in with woe and wretchedness.—"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence,

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even of your lusts that war in your members?" Yes, from the unhallowed pride and gross selfishness of the human heart come forth wars between nations, party-feuds, individual animosities, and all those hateful exhibitions of tyranny, oppression, fraud and slander, which stain the pages of history, and the recitals of which, from time to time, grate upon our ears. And who that thinks of the innumerable evils that flow from sinful passions upon mankind, does not see the essential utility of that grace whose special praise it is, that "it worketh no evil to his neighbour?" Charity, the fruit of God's Spirit, is that grace. He to whose soul it has been imparted, and who lives under its happy influence, cannot be the voluntary author of injury to any. This is indeed, a *negative* praise, but one that involves the most important consequences. Upon this character of Charity the Apostle founds the praise of its *fulfilling the law.* After enumerating the various prohibitions of the Second Table, he adds, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, THEREFORE love is the fulfilling of the law." It is that affection which reigns in heaven, where there is no disposition to evil, but where all is harmony and holy communion.

2. Christian Charity prompts us to *contributions of our property and alms-deeds,* for the relief of others. The objects, in this case, are they who are in need. Charity stops not to inquire whether they be countrymen, or foreigners; of *our* religious persuasion, or of

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another;—no, nor whether they have been our foes, or our flatterers. Enough to the charitable Christian that a fellow-Creature hath need. If he be a Brother, he yields him the balm of a Brother's sympathy, and the supply of a Brother's bounty. If he be an enemy that hungers, he feeds him; if he thirst, he gives him drink; and thus affords a fair proof of the grace within him.

This practical expression of our Charity,—the ready distribution of our means to the aid of the poor, has ever been one of the many excellent results of our holy Religion. Its great Founder has pressed it upon his followers, no less by the language of his example, than of his precepts; and, as if to remind us of the perpetual obligations of Charity, he tells us, "The poor ye have always with you." When he said this, he certainly did not intend to encourage an indifference to their condition. No, He who himself associated with the poor, and the distressed, and the despised, among men, for the express purpose of doing them good, recommended them strongly to the compassionate regards of his people, in all ages of the world. They are a class of our fellow-immortals, whose existence is perpetuated among us, to call forth the kinder sympathies of our nature, and to draw into visible truth the finer fruits of the Christian spirit. They make, from the necessity of their condition, a continual appeal to the sincerity of our profession, as the followers of HIM "who went

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about doing good." We cannot, therefore, without guilt, withhold the relief which Providence enables us to bestow. To withhold, indeed, from the needy that aid to which they have a claim, is to be unjust, not to them only, but to ourselves also. We deny ourselves some of the most delicate pleasures of which the heart is susceptible. If we turn away our eyes from scenes of poverty and suffering,—if we shut our ears against the cries of wretchedness, and the tales of woe, we reject some of the most profitable lessons that are taught in the school of Providence;—we remain strangers to a large and interesting portion of the history of human nature; and we practically contradict the Scriptural maxim, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting." Yes, the benevolent visitor of the house of mourning," is frequently enriched with a double blessing,—he enjoys the smile and the tear of gratitude, on the face of the sufferer whom he has relieved,—and he retires with a heart more softened into compassion for the miseries of men, and more subdued into sentiments of piety and devotion towards God. When he "weeps with them that weep," he knows what is otherwise unintelligible, "the joy of grief." He participates the gladness of the widow whose "heart he has caused to sing;" and when he melts at the distresses of one whom he saves from ruin, "the blessing of him who was ready to perish cometh upon him."

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That special branch of Christian Charity, denominated, "Brotherly Love," was the subject of our preceding chapter. We will not recur to the topics already adverted to; but, while on the present subject, we seem forcibly reminded of one definite expression of that love deserving our notice.—We mean the contributions of the richer and abler Members of a Church of Christ to the support of their poor Brethren, at the Lord's Table. The practice of contributing for such a purpose, on such an occasion, is of ancient origin, and uniformly observed in numerous Christian Churches. It is evident, also, from every account we have received of the first Christians, that it was a prime object with them to contribute to the necessities of the saints. The Apostle in his exhortation to the believing Corinthians, says "concerning the collection for the Saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, (the day on which, it is elsewhere stated "the disciples came together to break bread) let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." No season, indeed, can well be supposed more appropriate to this exhibition of Charity and Love, than when the Christian is commemorating the grace and love of *Him* "who, though he was *rich*, yet, for his sake, became *poor*." He reflects, that it was at that solemn and interesting period, when this holy ordinance was instituted, that the Saviour took occasion to enforce his new commandment of Brotherly Love,—"As I," said he "have loved you, that ye also love one ano-

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ther." The Christian's best feelings are at this time, in most lively operation. He is then most powerfully reminded of his interest, in common with *all* believers, in the precious sacrifice once offered for sin. He is then practically acknowledging the *union* of the Saints, and professing his conviction that they are "all one in Christ Jesus." His heart, on such an occasion, is most sensibly impressed; and exercises, with increased effect, the graces of faith, love, gratitude and humility. It may, therefore, be presumed, that he is then most tenderly alive to the claims of his poor Brethren on his charitable support.

It is, however, to be lamented, that this pleasing fruit of Christian Love, to which so interesting a season seems so well adapted, is not always visible. We have had occasion to observe deficiencies in this respect, which we could not but regret. Complaints of a similar nature have we also heard from others, whose range of observation entitled them to serious attention. We submit, therefore, the consideration of this Christian duty to our pious readers; and if any are conscious of a relaxed attention to it, in their own case, we entreat them to put from them all ground of such complaint, by proceeding to make up what they feel to be wanting of their fulfilment of so important an obligation.*

* It is not improbable, that much of the deficiencies here complained of may arise from objections entertained against some supposed misapplication of these Sacramental Con-

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3. The Charity of the Gospel prompts the Christian to *every active service, or office of kindness in his power, for the secular good of his neighbour.* Acting under its influence he will not confine himself to almsdeeds. As he has opportunity, he is ready to do good, in every possible way unto all men. It may be easy for him to bestow pecuniary relief; but he stops not there. His Charity is not of that calculating kind that takes up the cheaper and less laborious modes of benevolence. It sets him upon acts of self-denial and personal exertion. Wherever he sees he can render a desirable good, he applies himself to effect it, nor does the question of its cost delay him. In many cases his Charity permits him not to stay for solicitation. It sends him on errands of mercy;—to discover the retreats of unobtrusive, uncomplaining, poverty and distress;—to find where the hungry, the naked, and the sick are languish-

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tributions. If, indeed, there be cases where they are, in any degree, disposed of to objects not generally recognized as legitimate,—if, after the cost of the elements used at the ordinance is defrayed, the surplus be applied to any other purpose, than the relief of the poor, it may be justly considered as an *alienation*, and as affording individuals so viewing it a reason for withholding what they would otherwise bestow. There are certainly other seasons for *general* church-collections, and the Communion-Table does not seem to be an appropriate board for receiving them. But it is the duty of communicants to ascertain the *fact* of such alienations, ere they voluntarily withhold their contributions at the Lord's Table. Wherever the objections alluded to are entertained, whether correctly, or incorrectly, the evil is much to be regretted. An unpleasant impression is made upon the minds of individuals at the ordinance, and the needy members of the Church are the inevitable sufferers.

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ing;—to enter the squalid hovels of human beings suffering all the varieties of wretchedness;—to look into those scenes of sadness, that would else have remained hid from the eye of Pity;—to elicit and examine those tales, that would not else have met a favourable ear; and to adjust to each case the kind and portion of relief which it seems to demand. This, so far as his own means extend, he does, with timely speed; and what is needful to the helpless and destitute, beyond his own resources, he labours to procure, by pleading their cause, in other quarters, sparing no exertion, till, from public Institutions, or private benevolence, his object is obtained. Besides the immediate supply which the exigency requires, whether food, clothing, medicine, or household-furniture, he freely affords to the objects of his Charity the instruction, advice, or professional assistance, most likely to promote their subsequent and permanent welfare. In these services, he rouses to industry the indolent, or dejected;—puts tools into the hands of needy workmen;—procures employment for them whom no man hath hired;—finds redress for the oppressed; and sends the children of the poor to schools and to honest trades.

Thus active is Charity. Its Offices, we see, are multifarious; and he who claims the possession of such a spirit must prove himself willing to enter on them all. But,

4. Christian Charity stimulates also to *spiritual services*. That Charity indeed, will not bear the epithet

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we give it, which is limited to the bodies and worldly circumstances of men. The main object of the Charitable Christian, in whatever he does for his fellow-creatures, is their spiritual profit. So far from separating this consideration from his compassionate feeling, it is its chief, and most operative, ingredient. The grace which has regenerated his own soul, has taught him to estimate its salvation infinitely above every other end. In a similar way does he estimate the value of every human soul. He cannot, therefore, look on men through all their exterior condition, but as immortal beings. It is in connexion with their future state he contemplates their present circumstances; and promotes their earthly interests only in subordination to those of eternity. They who have not yet been awakened to the vast disproportion of these interests, whose concern for their own immortal state has never been duly excited, may stint their bounties to the wants of the poor dying frame, and the cares of a transitory being. Beyond these they see nothing for which they have to provide, either in their own case, or in that of others. But the enlightened Christian cannot do this. He feels the supreme importance of heavenly things, and he longs to be the instrument of conveying this feeling to the minds of others. He goes, therefore, among the sons and daughters of affliction and misery. He sees, it may be, the ravages of sin in their sufferings; and the sad spectacle cannot but suggest a humbling reflection on the depravity of our nature. Passing from one

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scene of sorrow to another, his soul, while it pities, recognizes the work of sin—the fruits of man's voluntary apostacy from God. He is aware, however, that the humbling and softening influence of affliction is often a happy preparation for the instruction of religion. The mind is now liberated from the distractions of healthful and active life; the insufficiency of every worldly possession is demonstrated; the native pride of the heart is subdued; and the man is now brought deeply to feel the truth of his mortality. The charitable Christian avails himself of this favourable juncture. He tenders his religious instructions; and he finds that what, at another season, would be spurned at as an insult, or neglected as worthless, is now gladly received as a boon, and prized for its value. He endeavours to turn the season of temporal affliction into a time of spiritual benefit. Upon such occasions, he becomes the honoured instrument of superadding to the aids of the body the medicine of the soul. He rejoices when he sees the eye that had been dimmed with sickness and grief, sparkle anew with lively gratitude, and the enfeebled emaciated hands lifted up in devout ascriptions of praise to God;—when he sees the desponding thankfully receive the consolations of the Gospel, and the dying, being successfully pointed to the atoning sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus Christ, meet the king of terrors with the hope and joy of a settled faith! Yes, on such occasions, he is the happy spectator of some of the most interesting exhibitions in the world of

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grace. It is in fulfilling the duties of a Christian visitor to the afflicted poor, that he hears the sweetest sounds that reach the ear,—the exultation of a soul reclaimed; and sees the loveliest sight that meets the view—the smile of resignation, on the sufferer's face. It is then he beholds, in the case of the needy and afflicted Christian, the paradox of the Apostle illustrated and explained. "As unknown, yet well known; as dying, and behold! we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." He witnesses the return of the prodigal, and hears his language, when "he comes to himself;" and he observes how the wanderer has had his way hedged up with thorns, and a wall raised before him, by the hand of mercy, that he might not find his paths, till he returned to the Lord, and joyed in the God of his salvation!

5. The charity of the Christian inclines him also *to give his countenance and support to public Institutions, that have for their object the moral and religious improvement of mankind.* He will aid, though with discrimination, yet with cheerfulness, those Schools, Colleges, and places of public Worship, that are recommended by their principles and character to his esteem. The Christian of the present day has, indeed, many calls of this nature upon his liberality. He is surrounded with numerous excellent Institutions that have clearly arisen out of the benevolent tendencies of Christianity.

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To *all* of them he cannot but wish well, and to as many of them as his means can reach, he will lend a helping hand. So far as the Spirit of his Saviour prevails in him, he compassionates a sin-destroyed world; and he must needs rejoice in every effort made for its recovery. The diffusion of Gospel truth he conceives to be the only means; his heart, therefore goes with the exertions of the Missionary, Bible, and Tract Societies. Looking upon them as accordant with the mind and will of God expressed in his word, he feels himself bound to countenance and support them. He takes, as one now restored from among the fallen race, a deep interest in the wide and efficient progress made by these Societies round the world. It is matter of congratulation to him, as a debtor to Divine Grace, that the Gospel is, through their means, making rapid advances to universal diffusion; and that the emancipation of souls from barbarous ignorance and heathenish idolatry is widely and vigorously promoted. The Christian necessarily desires the evangelization of the world. His habitual prayer is, that the "way of God may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations." He looks on "the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth," as the inheritance and possession of the REDEEMER, by right of promise, and, to be an instrumental auxiliary towards its fulfilment, he considers a high privilege, as well as a bounden duty. He sees, in the existence of the Societies mentioned, an opportunity presented of indulging this Christian feeling. The servants of God, in his own

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and in other countries, are combining their energies for the advance of the sacred cause. They are giving to it their time, their talents, and their property; and whatever of these *he* possesses, he knows, is held in trust for God. When, therefore, he hears the call of his Master, he cheerfully surrenders it; and sends up what aid he can to the great and good operations which the wisdom of God has taught his servants to adopt. In so doing,—in thus enrolling himself a member of associations for supplying the spiritual wants of a world, he is actuated by motives of the purest and most important kind.—He seems as though he heard, in these calls upon his efforts and his means, the voice of his Master, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give,"—and he hastens to obey. The honour of the REDEEMER is concerned,—and he is forward to promote it. But he is especially prompted by Charity, that heavenly grace which flows through his soul as the love of God and of man, and his heart burns within him to aid those movements which so directly tend to bring "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." The Christian knows that God has connected his own glory with the redemption of the world; and his best principles urge him to prayer, to privations, to personal sacrifices and labours, to bring about those events, in which such dear and interesting objects are accomplished,—the emancipation of the human race from the dominion of sin, and the kingdoms of this world made the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

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Such is the influence of true, evangelical Charity on the mind of the Christian. Who that names the name of Christ, does not seek to have this grace wrought and matured within his heart. Who that examines the evidences of his own Christianity, can overlook this eminent characteristic. He whose soul is not charitable, is not right with God,—is not a disciple of him who is pre-eminently compassionate and merciful, and who is ever touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

Numerous are the obligations that lie on the Christian to cultivate the grace of Charity.

1. *No degree of religious Knowledge, no spiritual gift, or attainment beside, will compensate the want of it.* "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels," says Paul, "and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy. and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing." Without the presence and operation of this grace all would be unavailing. He means to say, that could he preach the Gospel in all the diversified languages of the world, enforce his preaching in all those languages, with all the powers and eloquence of an Angel; were he

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even distinguished by the super-natural gifts of predicting future events, and of comprehending all science, and all mysteries; and had faith to perform all miracles: yet if Charity were wanting, he was, as it regarded himself, *nothing*. The humblest believer in Christ, whose bosom was animated by this Divine principle, would be far greater than he. And to show the vanity of all pretensions to the grace of Charity, on the footing merely of alms-deeds, and even of Martyrdom, he declares, that a man may strip himself of all his possessions and give them to the poor, and what is more, may resign his body to the stake, and yet be destitute of Charity! Pride and vain-glory may rule the man who astonishes the world by his gifts and attainments;—a Balaam may prophecy, and a Judas perform miracles;—a stoic hardihood and obstinate attachment to a favourite system may prepare some to undergo tortures and death; but in all these Charity has no place. It is other principles that stimulate and swell the heart, and they are all offensive in the sight of God. The highest gifts, unless directed with supreme and disinterested regard, to the glory of God and the good of men, are no sign of heaven's acceptance; and that faith only "which worketh by love" is a fruit of the Divine Spirit.

2. *Charity well becomes the Christian, as being himself a peculiar object of it.* Had not God exercised Love, free undeserved Love, towards him, he had been yet in his sins; he would not have known what pardon,

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and sanctification, and faith, and hope, were. He *was* a child of wrath, even as others; "but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved him, even when he was dead in sins quickened him to spiritual life in Christ." He owes all to Love. It was Love that brought the Saviour from heaven to perform the work, and to suffer the penalties, which an atonement for his sins demanded. The Spirit, in Love, applied this redemption to his soul; and of a rebel, made him a son and heir. And the Christian still receives, and must daily receive, fresh tokens of the goodness and Love of God. He has daily need of mercy to pardon and grace to help; and these he can ask only on the ground of God's free Love in Christ as his Redeemer. If these things are so, who so bound to the cultivation of Charity as the Christian? If he has the witness within himself of so much Love, on the part of God towards him, his heart will glow with love in return to the great Fountain of all benignity; and being there fed, it will expand, in every form of kindness and Charity, towards the people of God, and the world at large. *He* cannot be unmerciful, who has felt the need and the relief of mercy; nor will *he* refuse to forgive a fellow-servant, a *hundred pence*, who thinks of the *ten thousand talents* forgiven him. No, Charity, in all its fine qualities, is congenial to the renewed heart. In so far as he realizes his standing with God, he will be induced to exhibit them all towards his creatures. When *he* is needy, "the Lord thinks upon him."

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When *he* mourns, his Redeemer gives him, "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning." When *he* is perplexed, and walks in darkness, "the Lord sends out his light and his truth," and they lead him;—and how can *he*, living in the experience of all this, but rejoice, as he has opportunity, to promote the welfare of his fellow-beings, in relieving their necessities; bearing with, and helping, their infirmities; enlightening their minds; enlarging their enjoyments; and cheering and encouraging them with hope and gladness on the way to heaven! In fine, he will seek to embody, in his own life and character, all those lovely features of Charity so admirably drawn by the Apostle, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity; but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

3. *The Christian is urged by the uniform example and frequent precept of Christ to the exercise of Charity.* That Faith which appropriates Christ as a Saviour, looks to him and studies him also, as a Pattern. This Pattern, indeed, is, in all things, perfect; and it is not in mere humanity to equal it. But we are expressly told that "Christ has left us an example, that we should follow his steps." We are called, as his disciples, to mark, and to *follow* his steps, as the child may those of

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his father, though not in equal measure. In all things He has, and must have the pre-eminence, and it is from himself only that we can copy the various graces that form and beautify the Christian character. The life of Christ upon earth was one entire exhibition of benevolence. His condescension,—his self-denial,—his acts of mercy,—forgiveness,—kindness and love, O! how divine! What a soft, attractive, lustre did they shed around him! The bodies and the souls of men were the objects of his pity. He healed,—he pardoned,—he restored the disabled organs of sense,—reanimated the dead; and taught the way, through himself, to God and eternal life! And all this he did amidst contempt, malice and cruelty. His miracles, the most distinguished for grace and mercy were blasphemously stigmatized;—his kind familiarity with sinners was made a reproach against his character; and even in the agonies of an ignominious death, he was reviled as an impostor! Yet in no instance was he betrayed into impatience, or angry resentment. He maintained invariably his meek, his gracious, his beneficent, course; and went forward to the death which he foresaw, and for which he came into the world, as a lamb to the slaughter.—"As a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth!" And what were all the doctrines, and precepts and prohibitions, which he delivered, but so many expressions of Charity, in its widest and most endearing sense: His "doctrine dropped as the rain: his speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb,

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and as the showers upon the grass." Well might the multitude that daily heard him, "bear him witness, and wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Under the influence of such considerations as these, the Christian is alive to the importance of cultivating the grace of Charity. To possess it in the spirit of it, he feels to be an integral part of his evidence that he is "born of God;" and as he is enabled increasingly to exemplify its genuine qualities, he gives the more decided proof that he is a "partaker of the divine nature."

How incumbent is it, then, upon all who would be considered the children of God to examine themselves, and see whether this spirit be in them. If it be a grace so indispensable, as an evidence of our real conversion, we do well to look for it, in our own character. With this view every motive, however secret, should be searched out, and strictly scrutinised. Nor must we be satisfied with our own opinion of it; we must bring it to the word of God; and with devout prayer for the light of his spirit, trace it carefully to its proper origin. In this scrutiny, too, if we are really desirous of a profitable result, we shall not overlook the opinion of others concerning us. It is a good rule, in such an exercise, to "make use of every friend and every foe." Our motives, indeed, are often hid from our fellow-creatures; but if the current opinion be flattering, we should the more closely watch and examine those motives for ourselves, lest we be found resting on human applause;—

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if, on the contrary, that opinion should be unfavourable and condemnatory, it will at least be wholesome to entertain some fear and suspicion; and sitting in judgment upon ourselves, to consider, and re-consider, upon what our characters are formed, and our expectations founded. It is not enough that we can appeal to certain acts of generosity and kindness for which we are distinguished. We may have in many instances, communicated to the poor and suffering. We may have shunned no opportunity of showing our liberality. The character of condescending, and compassionate, and sympathizing, may be justly awarded us. But there remain certain questions, which, with a serious and honest spirit, we ought to put to ourselves. Are our acts of Charity performed merely to relieve our own feelings, when pained at the view, or recital, of other peoples' afflictions? Does ostentation enter into our motives? Are our Charities intended as a purchase-price of public esteem and favour?—or are they given to buy off the importunity of applicants? Is it to quiet our consciences which would otherwise reproach us?—or do we indulge the pharisaic notion, that we are thus acquiring a meritorious righteousness and a title to the blessings of heaven?—If in either of these cases, our consciences tell us "we are verily guilty," we have need to take the alarm.—The Charity of the Gospel is not ours. These are motives which pollute the spring of Charity. If, upon careful examination, we detect any one of them in ourselves, it ought to humble us before God; and our

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prayer should be, that he would take away all such iniquity from us, that our Charity may be "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." But if our hearts condemn us not in this matter; if we are conscious of no other motive than the love of God and of man, in our feelings and doings of Charity, "then have we confidence towards God," a confidence that they are wrought in us by his Spirit. Our Charity, if acceptable with God, will be performed "with a willing mind." We shall take delight in the exercise of doing good. While we are actuated by a sincere love to God, who wills us to be beneficent, we shall find obedience a pleasure; and reckon it our meat and our drink to do his will. And, as it regards the objects of our Charity, our bounty will be *disinterested*;—we shall "do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again."

Let it, then, be the business of our lives, to cultivate this amiable, this essential, fruit of the Spirit. With this view, let us learn to mortify every evil passion that militates against it. Let us watch and pray against every feeling of Envy. This odious passion, which is from beneath, cannot endure heaven-born Charity; they cannot, therefore dwell in the same bosom. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." The very breath of Envy would slay Charity; and it must be mortified, and utterly extirpated, ere Charity can have any place in the heart.

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Let us strive against emotions of Hatred and Wrath. Whenever these take possession of the soul, they are death to the fine feelings of Charity. The Christian owes Hatred to nothing but sin; and he will restrain anger, as inimical to his usefulness in the world, and to his own peace. Love and Humility are expected to distinguish his character. It is material to his progress in the divine life, that these should be in habitual exercise; and these hush every tumultuous passion, and leave the Christian at leisure to "every good word and work." Let us also watch, with jealousy and prayer, against any tendency in our disposition to Avarice. This vice is strongly stigmatized in the Scriptures. There it is nothing less than Idolatry; and how justly is it so called!—The covetous man makes gold his idol. He admires it for *itself;* not for its *use.* He relies upon his wealth, more than upon his God; and loves it more, and takes more pains, and suffers greater sacrifices, to make it his possession. Such a vice is not only opposed to every human virtue and every Christian grace, but it is the "root of all evil." It shuts up the heart against Charity; feeds selfishness, and teaches cruelty, oppression, craft and dishonesty. It draws its unhappy possessors into various "temptations and snares, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." It degrades them in the eyes of the world. No man, good or bad, can esteem a covetous character. It is universally regarded, not only as odious and contempt-

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ible, but as injurious to society.—And, what is of greater moment, it is highly offensive in the sight of God. The covetous are they whom the Lord is expressly said to abhor. "Let not covetousness," says the Apostle, be once named amongst you, as becometh saints;" and he takes occasion to particularize the *covetous* in a black catalogue of sinners who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Let us, therefore, flee these noxious passions, as we would flee the plague. Let us maintain a holy warfare against them; deriving from the Spirit of all grace the weapons and the strength needful to victory. Let us seek, in the exercise of the charitable affections, to be so many guardian and ministering angels to our fellow-men; diffusing good, and lessening evil, wherever we can. Let us thus strive to imitate the Divine Character itself; to be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful, and so fulfil the command of our Lord, who urges us to the practice of every Charity, that we may prove our filial relation to Him, "who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

Besides, in the habitual exercise of this grace, we are assured of the approbation of God. It is not the *ground* of our acceptance with him; but it is a bright and pleasing *evidence* of it; and will not fail of its reward. "Give," says our Lord, "and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and running

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over." In fine, it is evident, from various Scriptural promises, that the blessing of heaven is peculiarly attendant on the charitable character.—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth: the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.—He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever!"

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CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

The preceding Chapters, we confess, present our readers with but an imperfect Portrait of the Christian. Many more points illustrative of that character might have been brought into view; and those which we have given are capable of better exhibition. We presume, however, that enough has been done to prove the Christian to be a DIVINE WORKMANSHIP—the result of a process which he neither originates, nor perfects, upon himself; but which is derived upon him from the good pleasure and sovereign mercy of God; and to prove, that, as the Workmanship of God, the Christian is, and must be, not merely a good character among men, but the best,—not merely *a fine improvement* of our nature, but the "HIGHEST STYLE OF MAN." We think also we have shown, that every man, as he would rise from the ruins of the fall, and be restored to the favour of God, and to the hope of glory, is bound to become a Christian; that the necessity of such a change, for such ends, applies equally to all the species; and that consequently no modification whatever of the natural state can establish an exemption. If a claim to such exemption be made in any case, it must be at the peril of him that makes it. The Scrip-

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tures countenance him not; they have "concluded all under sin," and therefore, all under the same necessity of change. The Jew, with all his Old-Testament advantages, and the Gentile, under his politest and most lordly aspects, are equally "shut up unto the Faith." If so, the question of most vital importance to each of us is plainly this, "AM I A CHRISTIAN?" If it be true that I am not necessarily one, because descended of Christian Parents, and the inhabitant of a Christian Country; or, because I have been educated in the doctrines and institutions of Christianity, and make profession of that Religion, I must have recourse to other, and more satisfactory, evidence. Now, to bring such an inquiry to a right conclusion, a serious attention to the CHARACTERISTICS just reviewed may be greatly useful. These, when genuine, are found only in the Christian.—Are these CHARACTERISTICS *mine*? If they are, that change of nature, that spiritual condition, to which they belong, and which constitutes the Christian, is consequently mine. A Divine agency has been employed to renew me, and hence those results. They are not the dispositions and habits of my *natural* state. Before the influence of the Spirit of God accompanied his word to my heart, "the imaginations there were only evil continually," and I was averse from "every good word and work." But the graces of Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, the Love of God and of his people, are the fruits of a new-creating Spirit;—they are "the things which accompany salvation," and are produced only by

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the POWER that saves. The most exalted Christian says, and says with grateful emotion, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

But it is material to remember, that the Christian is a *growing* character. Those graces must not only *be* in him, but they must *abound* in him. The "tree is made good,"—it is not enough; it must also be *fruitful*. The first sketch of the Divine likeness is drawn,—it is not enough; it must also be *filled up*. The infant-Christian is born,—it is not enough; he must be *matured to manhood*, he must aspire to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In regeneration the component parts of the new creature are, indeed, all supplied, but each in the size and weakness of the Babe. Spiritual life is infused into the soul, which was before dead in sins; but the indications of that life are, at first, limited and feeble. New perceptions of the truth are given; but those perceptions are, at first, obscure. A relish for divine things is created; but that, at first, is faintly discernible. New appetites of hunger and thirst are excited; but these are, at first, easily disturbed, and feebly expressed. In fine, the new-creature, or that which is born of the Spirit, is, in this respect, like that which is born of the flesh. Each one carries the resemblance of his respective Father, but each on a diminutive scale. The time of birth is "the day of small things." It is only the commencement of a new Being, and would be insignificant, but for its destination. The

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feeble, helpless, infant is to become a Man. He is not therefore, to be despised. The new Creature in Christ Jesus will come to the measure of his fulness. This process of spiritual growth is secured by the very nature of the new birth. The principle infused invigorates and expands wherever it quickens. To this end it is infused. Its operation has a direct tendency to make the Christian, "grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ:" so that the gradual development and increase of the *natural* powers are not more fully assured, than are those of the *spiritual*.—There is a "Growth in Grace."

This is not a merely theological term, but one of New-Testament derivation, expressive of the Believer's continued improvement in the health and vigour of the spiritual life, as felt in his soul from Divine communications; and exhibited in the practice, by the increased exercise of every Christian grace;—expressive, in fine, of his progress toward an entire conformity to the mind and will of God. The Scriptures uniformly speak of this Growth as a fact not to be questioned,—as a consequence to be assuredly expected from the principle of grace. It is a doctrine taught there under various figures, but all of them expressing in the liveliest manner, the idea of increase, and growing excellence. The Christian is there exhorted to "desire, like the new-born babe, the sincere milk of the word, that he may *grow* thereby." His path is there said to resemble

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"the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The word of God is that good seed sown within him by the holy Spirit, and which "springs up, and bears fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold." Some of the most encouraging promises are also of this character. "The righteous," says the Psalmist, "shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." And the prophet, in strains singularly beautiful and consolatory, assures the people of God, that "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

This progressive increase is the privilege of every true Believer. We grant that its evidences of vigour and rapidity are by no means equal in all. The trees of righteousness, though all cultivated by the same Divine hand, are not all of equal stature, strength, or beauty; but there have all the living principle within them. As in nature, there are young and tender plants, as well as strong and stately trees; so, among Christians, there are some who have but lately received that Charac-

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ter, and whose graces are only beginning to appear; and there are others of longer experience, who have longer "followed on to know the Lord," and whose attainments are consequently more distinguished. There are some of little faith and scanty knowledge; and others of stronger faith, of greater conformity to the image of God, and who are enabled to become subordinate patterns to their weaker Brethren. But all true Christians are members of Christ's mystical body; they, therefore, all grow in their participation of his Divine nature. Though the growth of all is equally assured, yet from its very nature, it is found amongst them in various degrees; neither is it, in any individual member, at all times, equally visible. Still, to the weakest saint the promise is given, "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

We derive the truth and certainty of the Christian's Growth from that which is the source and cause of it—his *Union* with Christ. It is in this blessed Union the Christian's spiritual life commences; and from this it is constantly maintained. The Apostle speaking of this subject, says, "I live;" and immediately, as if it wanted correction, he adds, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This life is *in* the Christian, as the *subject* of it, but Christ is the communicating Author. It is the Christian's possession by gift; but "this is the record," says the Apostle John, "that God hath given to us

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eternal life, and this life is *in his Son*. He that hath the Son hath life." It is, therefore, only in virtue of Union with his life-giving Head that the Christian lives and grows. Apart from Him there can be no spiritual life, as there can be no animal life in an amputated limb; nor vegetable life in a branch that is lopped from the tree. To illustrate and establish this important doctrine seems to have been a prominent object in the instructions which our Lord himself addressed to his early disciples. One of the liveliest metaphors he employs with this view is that of the tree and its branches. "Abide in me," he says, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." A stately tree that downwards strikes its roots into the bowels of the earth, throwing them, at the same time, widely around, to ensure a firm and lasting grasp of the soil on which it stands, and upwards bears upon its body, and round its head, a multitude of lively boughs adorned with the varied beauties of foliage, blossoms, and fruit, presents to the eye one of the finest objects in nature. Under this view, Jesus Christ is an ever-living TREE. His root is in his Divinity; and no violence can loosen it,—no force can tear it up. Many are the branches that adorn him. They all derive their life and nourishment from his root; and numerous as they are, they all live, and are all fruitful; for, "because *He* lives *they* shall live also." "I," says Christ, "am the Vine, and ye are the Branches."

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The analogy is striking. There is a *natural* union between the tree and its branches,—there is a *spiritual* union between Christ and his people. "Ye are not in the flesh," says an Apostle, speaking to believers, "but in the spirit;" and another, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Between the tree and its branches there is an union of *participation*. The branch derives its vegetable life and peculiar qualities from the tree on which it grows;—the true Christian derives, with his spiritual life, all his gifts and graces from Christ to whom he is spiritually united. "I give unto them," he says "eternal life, and they shall never perish. And the beloved Disciple, alluding to the same union, observes, "Of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace." Again, the union subsisting between the tree and its branches is, consequently, an union of *increase*. So long as the sap circulates in the tree, the branches continue to increase in circumference and length. The nourishment communicated by the root, at the same time that it enlarges and strengthens the union, causes the branch to shoot up and aspire continually, till it has attained the full size and stature destined for it. So is it with the happy subjects of this spiritual union. They also have a "measure of stature" to which they must arrive,—"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Thus united, they participate the influences of the Holy Spirit to enlighten their minds, to purify their hearts, enlarge

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their capacities, and cause them "to increase with the increase of God." What a delightful reflection! How honourable, how blissful, the union! And, for the encouragement of faith, Believers are also assured that the closer to Christ, the more evident their growth; as the nearer the root, the larger the bough. "Cleave unto the Lord your God," says the admonition; "and," says the promise, "One man of you will chase a thousand." The Saviour also tells his disciples, "He that abideth in me, and I in him,—an union peculiarly intimate and close! "the same bringeth forth much fruit."

It ought also to be observed, that this Growth, as it regards its subject, is *universally* diffusive. Though it be gradual in its attainments, it is complete in the *compass* of its operations. *All* "the inner man is renewed, day by day." There is a gracious influence excited in every affection of the Christian's heart, and on every power of his mind. He undergoes *throughout* a happy change, or holy improvement. His *Desires* are drawn off from the gross and unworthy things of time, and directed to purer and more sublime objects,—to the acquisition of heavenly wisdom,—to the contemplation of the greatness and goodness of the Divine Character,—and to the enjoyment of communion with God.

He grows in *Knowledge*. His understanding is gradually enlarged and invigorated, to comprehend

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with clearer and happier effect the doctrines of his faith and the precepts of a holy life. This increase of Knowledge belongs only to him who loves God; for it is love that impels him to the close, constant, and attentive study of the Divine word which is blessed with success. His is not merely the improvement of a student in science, but the growing Knowledge of a Child respecting the character and doings of a Father, in whose house, and under whose care, he is passing his life. It is in this sense he "follows on to know the Lord,"—a privilege equally sure to the plainest and simplest, as to the most intellectual, Christian. His understanding opens also to an increased acquaintance with himself. He is led by the tuition of the Spirit to exercises which bring out before him more and more of his true character;—to that scrutiny of his own heart which detects his motives, his inclinations, and the prevailing current of his thoughts;—and to that vigilant comparison of his words and actions with the rule of the Gospel, which shows him, from time to time, the progress of his conformity to the will of God.

The Christian grows also in the spirituality of his *Affections*. They are taught to fix supremely on God and the things that are above, where He is. But this is not effected at once. At first, when they were turned from the world to God, the attraction of sensible objects was still great upon him, and the spiritual tendency of his affections much disturbed. The young

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and untried Christian may, indeed, be ardent in his affections, and often is so. The new views he has obtained transport his soul; he exults in the course on which he has entered; and, ignorant alike of his own weakness and the difficulties before him, he seems to think the battle already fought and the prize already won. But such a state of the affections has a character of unsteadiness in it. Disappointments are then inevitable; and are also highly useful. The exuberance of youthful ardour, no less in the spiritual, than in the natural life, wants the check of experience. This is gained as the Christian advances. Every exercise of his faith and patience gives strength and fixedness to his better affections; and tends, under the operation of the Holy Spirit to confirm them into a habit. The ardour of his soul, at first unequal, settles into a calmer, steadier, more enlightened, energy of mind. His love and preference of divine things become more decided, draw him more habitually, and more powerfully, from worldly distractions, and more strongly characterize him as one who is "after the Spirit," and in pursuit of "things unseen, which are eternal."

In fine, the Christian grows in *Congeniality with the mind and will of God.* The great end of that spiritual process called Sanctification is *Likeness to God.* Into this he grows, as he learns to "savour more the things that be of God, and less the things that be of men;" as he becomes more acquiescent in the dealings

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of God with him, and obtains that disposition of mind with his Lord, which enables him to say, "Not *my* will, but *thine* be done." In whatever degree he suffers the natural bias of his own heart to oppose the mind of God, in that degree does he betray his deficiency of Growth in this respect. This he will no doubt often discover. But as he passes through the discipline of the Christian life, he is enabled from such discoveries to gather wisdom. He gains in holy jealousy over himself, in circumspect walk and conversation, and in an aptitude to merge his own inclinations and passions in the supremely wise counsel and good pleasure of God. Where he once halted, and refused to go, he is taught to say, "Lord, I will follow thee, whithersoever THOU goest!" Where before he balanced between the influence of the world and the rule of Christ, he learns to say, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." And where, under afflictive dispensations, he was tempted to repine, the spirit of David is given to him, and he says, "Behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." It is thus his varied experience is made conducive to his spiritual improvement. The Holy Spirit trains him through it all to every needful attainment. During his continuance in the body, his faith is still gaining a greater and greater influence over his sentiments and practice. Communications of "grace for grace" are ever enriching and augmenting the good treasure of his

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heart, whence proceed the corresponding fruits of holy principles, purified affections, and a godly life.

We mean not, however, by any thing we have advanced, to say, that this spiritual Growth is *uniform* throughout,—that it is invariably the same in manner and degree. There are winter-seasons in the Christian's life;—nay, there are times when he seems to retrograde rather then advance. It is not to be denied that, in the case of the most eminent Christians, the law of the members will occasionally prevail. This is sufficiently evident from not a few plain and faithful records in the sacred Scriptures. The Apostle Paul acknowledges it to be true of himself; and the history given us of David, and other Old-Testament saints, affords some striking evidences of the power of sin within them to betray their hearts and retard their spiritual progress. The Christian, forgetful of his Lord's admonition, "Watch and pray," is sometimes surprised into sin. Some peculiar temptation presents itself;—he is not fully aware of his danger, nor of the need of fresh aid from above, and he is suffered to fall. This is the inevitable consequence of meeting his enemy alone. But he is never *wholly*, nor *finally*, left to the unequal contest. Though he falls, he rises again. He is still in Divine keeping; and from such experience the Holy Spirit enables him to advance the more sensibly in the graces of repentance, and self-denial, watchfulness and humility. His Counsellor, his Deliverer, is never far

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from him. He feels his strength return; for he hears the reviving call, "O Israel," return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." On such occasions he exults, with fresher and more exalted delight, in the faithfulness of a promising God.—"For the Lord God," he exclaims, "will help me; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God will help me, who is he that shall condemn me?"

This tendency of the Divine life to wax stronger and stronger is, when rightly understood, a test of Character. Where there is no Growth, there is no life. It becomes then a question of the most serious import to every professing Christian, whether his spiritual improvement be really advancing. In many cases it may be slow, and scarcely discernible; nevertheless, where regeneration has taken place, some measure of progress will ever be found. Every branch that is truly in Christ not only puts forth its fruit, but, under the care of the great Husbandman, it is made to bring forth *more* fruit. It is not, however, every appearance of Growth that must be accepted as evidence of spiritual life.

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There is a spurious kind from which it must be carefully distinguished. So far as *external* marks are concerned, the Christian life is often dexterously mimicked by the hypocrite and formalist. Tares grow as well as wheat; and there are fruits that are nourished and forced by art, as well as those that are fed by showers from heaven and the solar rays. But there are marks by which a discrimination may be made. A false Growth often makes a specious show;—but if it be a show of *Knowledge*, it is detected by the *pride* which accompanies it. If it be an exhibition of *zeal*, its spurious character is found in some *selfish or worldly motive* by which it is prompted. If it be the appearance of a glowing *devotion*, its hollow pretensions are evinced in the *self complacency* with which the hypocrite receives the flattery of the world, or in the inconsistency of his daily walk. On the other hand, where knowledge and humility, zeal and piety, devotion and watchfulness, are seen growing together, there, we are warranted to believe, is to be found genuine Growth in grace. There is in the true Christian an abiding principle of faith in the Son of God, and hence he cannot fail to receive, as his case may require, the enlivening purifying and enlarging influences of the Holy Spirit which distinguish him from the mere pretender. Humble he may be, and ought to be, under a sense of native unworthiness; but he is sensible of an habitual desire after a perfect conformity to the mind of God. He longs to be delivered from every thing that retards his heavenly pro-

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gress. He feels a growing congeniality with the precepts of the Gospel. Deeply convinced of their truth, he admires their beauty, adores the wisdom that framed them; and is careful to exemplify them, not for vain-glory, or self-righteous presumption, but that he may "live to the glory of God his Saviour in all things."

How delightful the consideration that this spiritual progress is secured to every sincere believer! How exhilirating to the Babe in Christ the promise in the Word, "Though thy beginning be small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase!" In fine, how consolatory, how reviving under every doubt, and fear, and temptation to unbelief, the assurance that "He who hath begun a good work in the Christian, will perform it unto the day of Christ!" But while we justly exult in this interesting view of the Christian's privilege, it becomes us also to remember that increase of grace is ever found attendant on the Christian's diligent and strenuous endeavours after it. While he is repeatedly assured of it in the form of a promise, he is also frequently urged to it; in the form of a command.—"Grow in grace," says the Apostle, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and, in the words which we have made the ground-work of the preceding Chapters, "Giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kind-

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ness; and to brotherly kindness charity." This is evidently in a style of great earnestness. The Apostle seeks to impress on the mind of the Christian, that the state to which he is called is one of constant watchfulness and exertion;—that he is not warranted to look for an increase of his gifts and graces in a frigid, careless, inactive, frame of mind; and that whatever his actual progress may be, he is ever under an obligation to pursue, with unrelaxed effort, the career of improvement. Agreeably to this impression the great Apostle of the Gentiles himself always felt and acted. Strong as he was in the faith, and high as many of his attainments were, he seemed to live under an habitual conviction that an ever wakeful energy of pursuit was essential to spiritual prosperity. "Not," says he, "as though I had already attained, or were already perfect,—but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We beg, therefore, in conclusion, to remind each of our Christian readers, that his proper attitude is that of *ever looking and pressing forward.* The law of his spiritual nature is persevering labour towards perfect holiness. There is no point in his ascending progress, where he is to lie down and slumber. He has commenced a race which he must continue to run, not only without wearying, but with increasing effort. He has

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entered upon a warfare, the toils and struggles of which are commensurate with his mortal career. The enemy is ever on the watch for his halting, and his vigilance ought never to relax. Some carnality still cleaves to his nature, against which an incessant contest must be maintained. The admonition of his Lord must be ever borne in mind, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." The true Christian deems it not enough that he has been enabled to exercise an act of faith on the Redeemer, that his justification through him is secured. This important point he cannot regard as his ultimate and final object. He recognizes the design of redemption to be not his *deliverance* only, but his *purification* also. He feels that, if he is "*justified*," it is that he may be also "*sanctified*, by faith." The love he bears to his Redeemer being the fruit of the Holy Spirit is never satisfied with any present attainment, but still urges the soul to aim at an entire conformity to the Divine image. This is the genuine operation of that law of the mind given him by grace. It is a law of love, and therefore a law peculiarly strong. It constrains him, on the one hand, to depart from all iniquity," and on the other, to follow after righteousness." It sets him on "living not unto himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again." It keeps ever close before his eye that perfect pattern left him by ONE who "fulfilled all righteousness, and whose meat it was to do the will of Him who sent him, and to finish his work." It stimu-

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lates him to cultivate a similar spirit, to put on more and more of his character,—"to walk even as he walked."

Oh! how much does it concern every Christian to be going on to "perfection!" to be daily, as it were, "outstripping himself;" to be visibly passing from one victory over the world to another; to be "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts;" to be increasing in heavenly wisdom; to be waxing stronger in the faith; to be rising in spiritual mindedness; and aspiring with greater ardour after a perfect likeness to God, and an uninterrupted communion with him! This is a truly ennobling process. It is connected, indeed, with many restraints; but they are the restraints of sinful appetites and passions. It subjects to many mortifications; but these are the health of the soul. It demands incessant labour; but that labour is itself a pleasure. Yes, it is only to the heartless formalist that a godly life can be irksome. To him it is drudgery and a weariness to serve the Lord. His soul still cleaves to the world. The yoke of Christ is, therefore, galling to him,—the burden, intolerable; and all the homage he renders to him is the unwilling, the forced observance of some external decorums. But the true Christian, to use the words of a contemporary Preacher, "finds the service of his Lord to be perfect freedom; his yoke easy, and his burden light;—such a burden as a pair of wings to a bird: they would be

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awkward and troublesome, and useless, if tied on; but as living parts of his body, they are graceful and pleasing, and the instruments of flight towards heaven."

Every consideration that weighs with the Christian, urges him to aim at constantly increasing improvement in his spiritual nature. The glory of God, the world and the Church, and his own present and future interests,—all require that he should bear much fruit; that his profiting should appear to all; that he should "abound in the work of the Lord;" that he should "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;" in fine, that he should "be diligent, that he may be found of God in peace, without spot and blameless."

To all this the Christian is stimulated by the highest possible encouragements. He is assured that "his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and repeated promises are given him of needful aid, and final success. He is not referred, for the accomplishment of his high and holy aims, to his own strength, his own wisdom, his own righteousness. He has no such resources in himself from which to draw. His fulness is in Christ his Head, from whom he derives all his sufficiency. If he is called "to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling," he is told, that "it is God that worketh in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If he is admonished to "lay aside every

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weight and the sin that easily besets him, and to run with patience the race that is set before him," he is also directed to "look unto JESUS the author and finisher of his faith." The warfare on which he is led is not at his own charges. The Captain of his salvation has been at all the cost, and has furnished out an armoury whence he equips the Christian for every contest. It is He who "girds his loins about with truth," binds on his feet "the preparation of the Gospel of peace," covers him with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation," and puts into his hand "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Let the Christian, then, take heart, and advance. "The Lord is the strength of his life, of whom should he be afraid?" To the fulness of grace in which he stands he has constant access by faith through Christ. There let him be a frequent applicant. Let him spread his every care, and confession, and supplication, before the throne. There, while he prays in the Holy Ghost, resting on the plea of his Redeemer's righteousness, he will find acceptance. His importunity will not offend; for "men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint." The vastness of his desires cannot exhaust; for the invitation runs, "Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it." The difficulties and perplexities of his case cannot embarrass; for it is to almighty Power and infinite Wisdom he applies; and however formidable his enemies, the promise ensures his victory—"Thou shalt tread upon the Lion and the Adder; the young Lion and the

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Dragon shalt thou trample under foot." However intricate and rugged his way, his successful progress through it is guaranteed—"Thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble."

We exhort the Christian, under such encouragements to "go on his way rejoicing." Let the gladness of his heart make his countenance cheerful. To this he is expressly enjoined—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." To this he is induced by its effects upon others. His steady and habitual cheerfulness is a living testimony to all in favour of the Truth in Christ; and holds up, as it were, to a world in anxious search after happiness, this public notice, "YEA, HAPPY IS THE PEOPLE WHOSE GOD IS THE Lord." And to this gladness of heart he is entitled, as his peculiar privilege; "for the Kingdom of God (or the life of God within him) is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The work which his Saviour has accomplished for him is *Reconciliation*; the legacy which he has left him is *Peace*. The state into which he is brought by the Spirit of grace is that of spiritual *Life*—a new creation; a creation destined to indefinite improvement in wisdom, purity, dignity, and bliss. He is thus brought into a delightful connexion with God in all his attributes, and in all his arrangements;—with angels and the Church above;—with the world of men on earth, and his Brethren in Christ around him;—and with the end of all

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things, when his Redeemer "shall come in the glory of his Father, with his Holy Angels; to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Such is the happy condition of the Christian, and such the ground of his joy.—Well may he indulge it! The ways of God through which he is *now* led, are "ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." In these ways he is enabled to sing, "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." And the issue abiding him is glory, honour and immortality; for "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away; and the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!"

FINIS.

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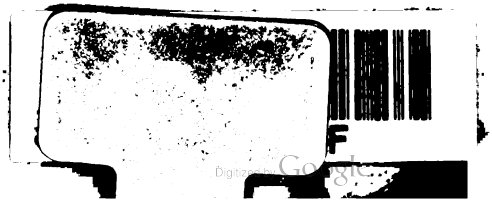
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